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## David G. Hartwell Notes on the Evolution of Horror Literature

### I. High and Low

"We dislike to predict the future of the horror story. We believe its powers are not yet exhausted. The advance of science proves this. It will lead us into unexplored labyrinths of terror and the human desire to experience new emotions will always be with us. . . . Some of the stories now being published in *Weird Tales* will live forever."

—editorial, *Weird Tales*, (vol. 4, #2; 1924)

By the early twentieth century, horror began to spread and separate in two directions, in literary fiction and in popular literature, mirroring the Modernist distinction between high art and low, a distinction that is rapidly disintegrating today in the post-Modern period but remains the foundation of marketing all literature in the 20th century. For most of the century, horror has been considered narrowly as a marketing category or a popular genre, and dismissed by most serious readers and critics. Horror is associated with ghosts and the supernatural, which in a way stand for superstition and religion—and one of the great intellectual, cultural and spiritual battles of the past 150 years has been on the part of intellectuals, to rid western civilization of the burdens of Medieval religion and superstition, especially in the wake of the great battles over Darwin and Evolution. Sigmund Freud, the psychoanalytic rationalist whose work underpins Modernism, invariably interpreted manifestations of the supernatural as evidence of neurosis. For instance, in his essay "A Neurosis of Demonological Possession in the Seventeenth Century" (1923), Freud says "we need not be surprised to find the neuroses of olden times masquerading in a demonological shape. . . . had more attention been paid to the history of such cases at the time, it would have been a simple matter to find in them the same content as that of the neuroses of today." The Modernist era, which began in the late 19th century, is an era of rationalism and science.

The death of horror was widely announced by Modernist critics (most finally Edmund Wilson, who devoted two essays in the 1940s to demolishing it), the specialists such as Lovecraft and Blackwood denounced, and the psychological investigations of Henry James, Kafka, Conrad and Lawrence enshrined as the next stage in literary evolution, replacing superstition and the supernatural as the electric light had replaced the flame.

Yet it was precisely at that moment, in the 1920s and '30s, that the first magazines devoted to horror began to appear, that the first major collections and anthologies of horror fiction from the previous hundred years were done, and the horror film came into prominence. Significantly, Lovecraft, in his classic study, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1937, revised), in examining the whole history of western literature concluded that over centuries and in a large preponderance of texts, the true sensations of horror occur rarely, and momentarily—in parts of works, not usually whole works. He wrote this during the generation when horror was actually becoming a genre, with an audience and a body of classic texts. A threshold had been crossed after a century of

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David G. Hartwell transacts with the sublime  
Joe Sanders tacitly agonizes over Thomas Harris  
Delia Sherman goes to college with Pamela Dean  
James Cappio explores *The Empire of Fear*  
L. E. Modesitt, Jr. runs David Brin to Earth  
Gordon Van Gelder cats sushi  
with Bret Easton Ellis

Plus Tories, octogenarians, bikes on the net,  
castration anxiety, the end of the bats, perhaps,  
and funny things everywhere

## Joe Sanders At the Frontiers of the Fantastic: Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*

It can be perplexing or even exasperating to watch a non-genre book win genre awards. How dare some outsider sneak into our territory! But when the interloper is as striking as Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*, it's hard to begrudge the book's winning the 1989 Bram Stoker Award or being nominated for the World Fantasy Award, even though it contains almost no trace of the fantastic themes or motifs that usually identify fantastic literature. Harris's novel works. Moreover, somehow it also does affect readers like horror fiction. So the question arises: How can non-supernatural fiction use "real-world" elements to produce effects similar to supernatural horror fiction? This isn't an altogether idle question, since the popular success of *Silence* means we can expect to see many more novels trying to do the same thing.

To see what *The Silence of the Lambs* does, we must examine the novel's action. The goal of the main characters is to catch a serial killer, the tabloid-christened "Buffalo Bill," before he can abduct another young woman, kill her, and flay sections of her skin. But studying physical evidence of past crimes is not enough to predict a lunatic's next action. To get insight into the killer's mental processes, Jack Crawford, head of the FBI's serial murder section, sends young trainee Clarice Starling to interview Dr. Hannibal Lecter, a brilliant but sadistic "sociopathic" psychiatrist who was also a strong secondary character in Harris's earlier novel *Red Dragon*. The process of the manhunt is the novel's main action; thus, most of *The Silence of the Lambs*'s characters face psychological rather than physical danger. Though the novel is interspersed with scenes describing the next victim trapped in a dark pit while Jame Gumb prepares to kill her, the story's major focus is on how Crawford and Starling maintain their sense of purpose despite growing awareness of frustrations, distractions—and the playfully disdainful viewpoint of Dr. Lecter himself, whose presence is felt far beyond the pages that actually describe him.

Losing one's certainty of moral purpose is a risk even for people who concentrate on the obviously moral goal of stopping a mass

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# THE DRAGON REBORN

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TOR BOOKS 1991—OUR 10th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

murderer. To understand the danger in *The Silence of the Lambs*, consider the end of *Red Dragon*, where Will Graham, one of Crawford's earlier proteges, realizes that he has alienated his family in the process of tracking a serial killer. Recuperating in a hospital, he thinks of a trip he took to Shiloh, the site of a bloody Civil War battle that now has become almost obscenely peaceful:

He had thought Shiloh haunted, its beauty sinister like flags.

Now, drifting between memory and narcotic sleep, he saw that Shiloh was not sinister; it was indifferent. Beautiful Shiloh could witness anything. Its unforgivable beauty simply underscored the indifference of nature, the Green Machine. The loveliness of Shiloh mocked our plight. (pp. 353-354)

So there is no supernatural judge to intervene, no absolute standard of values to sustain humans. Significantly, Graham can make this disquieting realization only when he is cut off from family ties, relaxed by drugs, and released from the urgent struggle toward a moral goal—the pursuit of the insane murderer Red Dragon. But it may not be simply Graham's own discovery. Graham's gift—or curse—has been his ability to empathize with the deranged outlook of serial killers. So the passage quoted above may echo the outlook of Dr. Lecter. In any case, Graham evidently is unable to reconstruct some meaningful purpose for his life. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, he is mentioned as being retired from the FBI, a drunk in Florida. Dr. Lecter, on the other hand, has found activity that sustains him; he amuses himself with the pain and death of other people, especially by hurting or destroying those who annoy or bore him.

One frightening thing about Harris's world, lacking supernatural meaning or intent, is that monsters often are more successful initially than normal humans at getting what they want. Most people need the approval of their fellows or the sanction of some moral grace. The mentally abnormal interpret reality by private standards, which makes it much simpler to plan their actions. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, for

example, readers soon learn that "Buffalo Bill" is actually Jame Gumb, who tans the skin from his victims into leather so he can stitch together a composite, perfect woman's skin. He believes that once he is finished he will be able to dip into it and become a woman. He is certain that accomplishing this will make him popular; for example, he wants no ugly seam along the spine of his leather garment because "it was not inconceivable that an attractive person might be hugged" (262). Meanwhile, Dr. Frederick Chilton, Dr. Lecter's keeper at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, is no less lonely, but considerably less practical. Dr. Chilton first imagines that he can sexually entice Starling, then that he can gain fame by manipulating Dr. Lecter into revealing Buffalo Bill's identity. Neither man's goal is achievable in the long term; however, the less "normal" Gumb is happier with himself and sustains his activities longer than Dr. Chilton's foolish attempt to control Dr. Lecter. And even Chilton feels less confused and frustrated than the abnormally fixated Crawford and Starling.

In the long run, though, living without the comfort of deluded certainty may be more productive. Gumb and Chilton eventually fail because they see people around them as merely objects to satisfy their desires. Crawford and Starling, even when they are trying to get someone to do what they want, respect the other person's values and needs. Thus Crawford knows how to manipulate his assistants' emotions to get their loyalty, but he tries not to overwhelm Starling. Even though he would enjoy the role of father/mentor, he realizes that is not what Starling needs: "He knew that a middle-aged man can be so desperate for wisdom he may try to make some up, and how dead that can be to a youngster who believes him. So he spoke carefully, and only of things he knew" (176). Difficult as this is, respecting another's independence not only encourages and maintains good social relationships, but it also helps the other person to establish a stable sense of self. During the novel, supported by Crawford (and egged on by Dr. Lecter), Starling realizes how much she still feels pain and anger at the absence of her father, a lawman who was killed when she was a small child. However, she manages to draw on memories of both her parents to put together a mature, integrated understanding of who she is.

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Kathryn Cramer, Features Editor; L. W. Currey, Contributing Editor; Samuel R. Delany, Contributing Editor;  
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Sometimes, however, achieving that kind of realistic but limited self awareness isn't enough. To locate Buffalo Bill/Gumb, Starling must leave the safety of the self she understands to extend herself into the consciousness of someone whose needs and values are *different*, even horrifying. And that means admitting desires that have been repressed, denied. To put oneself figuratively inside the skin of a person who violates the rules of decent behavior, one must accept that all possibilities are present in oneself. Doing this is extremely dangerous to the manhunter's stability. That was how Will Graham caught Dr. Lecter and the Red Dragon, but doing so destroyed him. Dr. Lecter himself has survived by shedding his human sympathy so that he lives purely for selfish amusement, for satisfying his curiosity about the taste of some novel experience. Consequently, Dr. Lecter does cooperate with Starling in exchange for information about her own life, during which she reveals how much pain she experiences in witnessing suffering. He is especially fascinated to hear how, as a child, she ran away with an old horse that was being fattened to be sold for dog food, and how she was spurred on by hearing spring lambs scream as they were slaughtered. In return, Dr. Lecter gives Starling the clue she needs to find Jane Gumb before he can kill again.

Helping Starling does not make Dr. Lecter less monstrous. It is not so much that he is humanized by contact with her as that giving sympathy is a novel, thus amusing, possibility for Dr. Lecter to entertain. But if he moves no closer to Starling—and, by extension the readers—he cannot be dismissed either. For we discover that we have extended ourselves toward him. Having escaped thanks to Chilton's blundering, Dr. Lecter writes a last letter to Starling during which he says, "I have no plans to call on you, Clarice, the world being more interesting with you in it. Be sure you extend me the same courtesy" (337). On the face of it, this is a warning: I won't pursue you if you don't pursue me. However, it also suggests that just as Dr. Lecter is interested by what Starling's character shows about the possibilities of human behavior, so also Starling—and readers—may be interested by what Dr. Lecter's behavior shows about the possibilities of human nature.

Fortunately for Starling, she never has to go as deeply into the abnormal consciousness as Will Graham did; instead, she focuses her attention on victims, trying to determine how they became vulnerable to Buffalo Bill. What this process shows Starling is dangerous enough. Following the trail of Buffalo Bill's first victim, she must empathize with a young woman who was so starved for personal attention that she was drawn to Jane Gumb—to the extent of writing him a loving, hopeful note from her prison cell (332). Starling can respond to this sense of inadequacy and "desperate need" because of her own uncertainties, though she has them under control by the novel's end. Therefore, she does not have to sink to the bottom of a dominant-exploitative relationship (which Crawford deliberately avoids) or slash her way to the top of one (as Jane Gumb chooses).

And Starling does succeed, preventing more suffering, so that at the story's close she is at least temporarily at peace, sleeping "deeply, sweetly, in the silence of the lambs" (338). However, Harris seems to acknowledge the kinship between Dr. Lecter's curiosity and Starling's activity as a manhunter: "Problem-solving is hunting; it is savage pleasure and we are born to it" (294). Perhaps the difference is that normal humans hunt for generally-approved goals and in packs, leaving that support only when they must track a rogue through wilderness.

Detectives—socially sanctioned manhunters—must be willing to track their quarry through emotional rather than literal thickets. The "horror" in *The Silence of the Lambs* stems from the readers' involvement in this disturbing enlargement of human possibility. And perhaps that is the answer to our initial question of how a novel about the hunt for a serial killer, who is abnormal but who readers never imagine to be supernaturally inspired or empowered, can affect us as horror fiction does. In his essay on our disturbing experience of "The Uncanny," Freud speculates that the uncanny "is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something that is estranged only by the process of repression" (148)—fear and desires that we currently refuse to acknowledge. The "normal" surface may even be necessary for the uneasy recognition of those repressed impulses; Freud notes that fiction with "an arbitrary and unrealistic setting" may "lose its quality of the uncanny" (160). Rosemary Jackson also helps explain how a non-fantastic tale might achieve the effect of the fantastic, as she incorporates but goes beyond

Freud to comment approvingly that a fantastic text shows desire, "a longing for that which does not yet exist, or which has not been allowed to exist, the unheard of, the unseen, the imaginary, as opposed to what already exists and is permitted as 'really' viable" (91). In other words, readers are at once attracted to and repelled by fantasy's expressions of contradictory, unthinkable impulses. And "horror" lies both in seeing what we crave and recognizing that we do crave it.

The hero of *Black Sunday*, Harris's first novel, recognizes this contradiction. Kabakov works to protect the weak and vulnerable, but while watching an eagle hanging menacingly over a flock of sheep,

he realized that he loved the eagle better than the sheep and that he always would and that, because he did, because it was in him to do it, he would never be perfect in the sight of God.

Kabakov was glad that he would never have any real power. (200)

Because he sees that his mixed impulses make him a dangerous man, Kabakov tries to use his manhunting skills for the good of society while not letting himself get close to other people. In later novels, Harris's sympathetic characters can't take this easy way out. They must wield power, and they must try to develop the interpersonal skills relationship that make them fit to use power. And while they are about it, Harris's people must try to preserve laudable aims while being obliged to see the world as monsters do, even at the risk of becoming conscious of themselves as potential monsters.

Discussing the tradition of "Supernatural Horror in Literature," H. P. Lovecraft says, in part, that "[a] certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present" (15). To describe Thomas Harris's fiction requires merely changing "outer" to "inner, unknown forces." For what is considered "supernatural" depends on how narrow one's sense of human nature is. To someone whose self-control is questionable—to most of us, in other words—the unfamiliar seems as threatening as the supernatural because questioning the limits of the acceptable also throws in doubt the limits of personality. Even a reader who recognizes that there are natural explanations for appalling actions can sympathize with the anguish of characters who are—or could be—responsible.

In Harris's novels, remember, one becomes a figurative rather than a "literal" monster. *The Silence of the Lambs* offers only a few, usually ironic suggestions of the supernatural as opposed to the abnormal. Jane Gumb looks like a bug-eyed monster when he puts on infrared goggles to prowling his hunting ground (188), his leather goods shop is called Mr. Hide (297), and, much more to the point, his dark basement "rambles like [emphasis added] the maze that thwarts us in dreams" (186). Gumb obviously has no supernatural powers; he cannot really transform himself into a woman. He becomes desperate enough to try, though, because no non-supernatural method will work. He fears that there is, in fact, nothing to transform. As Dr. Lecter explains to Starling, Buffalo Bill is not a genuine transsexual. He is nothing. The glimpses readers see of Jane Gumb do suggest the roots of his present activities. Abandoned by his mother as an infant, Gumb originally hunted and killed women; now he has decided to become one, referring to himself as "Mommy" to his dog-as-child Precious. But his real motive is shown in Dr. Lecter's memories of one of his murdered patients, a homosexual who had kept company with Gumb years before but told Dr. Lecter that Gumb is not gay, "not anything, really, just a sort of total lack that he wants to fill, and so angry" (157). After first seeing a butterfly struggling out of its cocoon, Jane began to imagine that an external transformation would give him a new identity. So he killed the homosexual's lover and flayed him: "Jane had made himself an apron . . . from Klaus, and he put it on and asked me how I liked him now" (158). Certain that he is unloveable, Gumb simply wants to become anything that can be loved, evidently comparing himself to the Death's Head Moth chrysalis he stuffs into the throat of each dead victim. Rather than making the choice of sexual identity the basis of his personality, Gumb assumes that one can put on an identity at will in order to be liked.

At the other extreme are characters like Starling and Crawford, who recognize that identity is constructed/discovered gradually, not conjured into existence. Between those extremes, though, floating free from inhibition as he does from conscience, is Dr. Lecter. *The Silence of*

Read This  
Recently read and recommended by Kathryn Cramer:

*Necrofile: The Review of Horror Fiction*, Issue #1, Summer 1991, edited by Stefan Dziemianowicz, S. T. Joshi, and Michael A. Morrison. Published by Necronomicon Press, 101 Lockwood Street, West Warwick, RI 02894. A single issue costs \$2.50. Subscription rates for one year (four issues) are \$10.00 (US), \$12.00 (Canada), and \$15.00 (overseas).

This is the first horror critical zine that I've fallen in love with. It's a quarterly, with only one issue out so far, but the first issue is wonderful.

Like nearly all first issues, there is an editorial declaring the magazine's editorial stance: "The horror field has long needed a publication devoted exclusively to extended discussion of contemporary horror literature, one that views the vast ocean of horror fiction and nonfiction discriminately but not narrowly. . . . *Necrofile* . . . was conceived with the idea that there is room in the field for a magazine that recognizes horror both as an established fiction with roots firmly sunk in the bedrock of classic literature, and as a popular fiction genre whose themes and concerns reflect the fears and anxieties of its time. We believe that these two aspects do not contradict, but rather complement one another, and that it is necessary to appreciate both if we are fully to understand horror's enduring appeal."

The cover piece, "Violence and Its Discontents" by Richard Fumosa, is a thoughtful evaluation of the *American Psycho* controversy: "We can begin to see why in this time of patriotic rationalization of mass violence, with its resultant self-denial, *American Psycho* is striking such an ultrasensitive

chord." There are lengthy, intelligent reviews of Thomas M. Disch's *The M.D.: A Horror Story*, Neil Barron's *Horror Literature: A Reader's Guide*, Alberto Manguel's *Black Water*, Robert E. Howard's *Selected Letters 1931-1936*, Dan Simmons's *Summer of Night*, Dennis Etchison's *The Complete Masters of Darkness*, Bruce Byfield's *Witcher of the Mind: A Critical Study of Fritz Leiber* combined with a review of Fritz Leiber's *Conjure Wife/Our Lady of Darkness* (Tor reissue), David E. Schultz & S. T. Joshi's *An Epicure in the Terrible: A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft*, plus couple of pages of short reviews. There is also a nifty article on the progress thus far of Dell's Abyss horror line, plus neat columns by Ramsey Campbell and Thomas Ligotti. For those of you unfamiliar with Ligotti's writings about horror, he published two marvelous meta-fictional non-fiction pieces on horror, "Notes on the Writing of Horror Fiction: A Story" and "Professor Nobody's Little Lectures on Supernatural Horror" in his collection *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (Carroll & Graf)—READ THEM! Ligotti's delightful first column in meant to be read in conjunction with these earlier pieces and one more that I have not read but must go find, "The Consolations of Horror" (*Crypte of Cabulhu* #68). The last few pages of the magazine contain a complete list of all the horror books published by American and British publishers, January through June, 1991.

These folks deserve your money. If you like *The New York Review of Science Fiction* and horror literature, spend your next ten bucks on *Necrofile*. You won't be disappointed.

the *Lamb's* offers no explanation for Dr. Lecter's condition. I have made a few suggestions above, but Dr. Lecter would reject them as simplistic, just as he would reject the official labels "psychopath" or "sociopath" as attempts to give a comforting appearance to the formless by naming it. As he tells Starling, "Nothing happened to me. . . . It happened" (19). He remains preternaturally alert and sensitive to nuances of human behavior but enigmatic himself. A reader (his name taken from the past participle of the Latin verb *legere*, "to read") who refuses to be read. As such, in many ways he is a better manhunter than the FBI agents—for his own satisfaction, of course. But that satisfaction is not simple cannibalism, as the audience's creepy-delighted reaction to the movie version of *Silence* cheapens the story is at the conclusion, where we see Dr. Lecter hungrily stalking Dr. Chilton. In the book, Dr. Lecter sends his former tormentor a letter designed to drive him into anonymous flight, the perfect torture for the vainglorious Chilton. Dr. Lecter does not have to butcher people literally; he knows how to exploit their weaknesses and dine on their souls.

Hmm—again, in that last sentence, I've slipped into speaking of Harris' novel in terms appropriate to horror fiction. Several times earlier, too, I've referred to Dr. Lecter as a "monster." But what does that mean? In *The Philosophy of Horror*, Noel Carroll explains that the monster in horror fiction is more than a physical threat; it rouses profound revulsion because it is a "breach [of] ontological propriety" (16)—that is, because it is a wrenching combination or distortion of categories (in the term "living dead," for example). Thus a "monster" rouses horror because it is "impure . . . categorically interstitial, contradictory, incomplete, or formless" (32). Because of this, monsters are "challenges to the foundations of a culture's way of thinking" (34). This fits Freud and Jackson's picture of horror arising from the recognition of repressed impulses. But Carroll adds that apprehension of such formlessness is at once the source of horror and of readers' attraction to horror fiction. The very fact that the horror can be contained in a coherent narrative demonstrates that we are not altogether at the mercy of irrational forces,

whether they come from the supernatural or from within ourselves.

Moreover, even within horror fiction, characters try at least to discover the source of their discomfort, and Carroll states that "the primary pleasure that narratives of disclosure [one variety of horror] afford . . . resides in the process of discovery, the play of proof, and the dramas of ratiocination that comprise them" (185). In other words, we want to be reassured that the human mind can find a shape for disorderly experience. Starling and Crawford show that this may be achievable, but their efforts are mundane, difficult, and temporary. Not much fun at all. On the other hand, Dr. Lecter is both detective and criminal, savior and monster. He attracts and repels with the message that he has found the shape of experience, the way to escape the contradictions of our nature. Moreover, Dr. Lecter not only sees the gaps between our ideals and our actions; he is detached enough from the painful confusion of ordinary humans to find humor in our incongruities. To be like him, all we would have to do is give up our rules of right and wrong, the code that represses us. Then we each could frolic alone in the darkness forever.

If the attraction of this character is a major part of *The Silence of the Lambs*'s fascination, we can expect to see many Dr. Lecter clones in the next few years. As a writer, Harris appears to be a leader in amusing readers with coldblooded, graphic depiction of collapsing certainties and appalling transformations. Edward Bryant, who surveys the flood of such fictions for *Locus*, sometimes calls them "suspense-horror in the vein of Thomas Harris" (17) or tales of "speculative madness" (19). But we don't have to wait to explore this subject. Such stories actually are part of a long literary tradition. The Misfit, in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find," contemplates a world without supernatural sanctions, one in which God never intervened through Jesus: "If I'd didn't then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best way you can—by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness" (2178). Earlier, at the climax of "Heart of Darkness," having seen what he is capable of once freed of his

inhibitions, Kurtz exclaims "The horror! The horror!" (75). Still earlier, in Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*, the narrator first asserts the contradictory principles that "Curiosity is vicious, if undisciplined by reason, and inconducive to benefit. . . . [But] Curiosity, like virtue, is its own reward. Knowledge is of value for its own sake, and pleasure is annexed to the acquisition, without regard to anything beyond" (16); then Edgar Huntly begins a series of impulsive, misguided, destructive actions that produce only death, despair, and indecipherable confusion. You can continue the list yourself, but be sure to include Oedipus, who probably would have agreed that curiosity can lead to horrifying discoveries about one's capabilities.

Harris' fiction is successful because it explores deeply some human issues that overlap the most potent concerns of horror literature. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Harris shows characters who accept and use constructively the guiding/restraining conventions of normal behavior, some who don't—and one who slides serenely past normal repres-

sions. The novel demonstrates how makeshift and vulnerable is the conventional sense of self. Though certain possibilities of action are denied to normal consciousness, Harris' characters must consider them, must even enter the mind of the abnormal actor to find and stop him. Readers do so too, with horror and wonder. It is difficult to feel secure after doing that, to imagine that the possibility of monstrous action has dissolved with the defeat of one specific monster. At the novel's close, Dr. Lecter implies as much in his farewell letter to Starling, as he celebrates the freedom that lies before him:

I have windows.  
Orion is above the horizon now, and near it Jupiter,  
brighter than it will ever be again before the year 2000. . . . But  
I expect you can see it too. Some of our stars are the same.  
Clance.  
(337) ▲

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#### Tam Lin by Pamela Dean

New York: Tor Books, April 1991; \$19.95 hc; 468 pages  
reviewed by Della Sherman

The university has a long and distinguished history in realistic fiction. Whether as the scene of the hero's intellectual awakening in a Bildungsroman like Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, or as the background for mythism in a mystery like Dorothy L. Sayers' *Gaudy Night* or Amanda Cross' *Death in a Tarned Position*, universities have provided writers with a perfect setting for extended meditations on life, literature, and love. In fantasies like Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, colleges and universities tend to confine themselves to the most strictly practical function of teaching young mages to wield and control their power. In all cases, however, the fictional university serves both as a retreat from the world and a window through which the protagonist may observe the world's social and philosophical structures.

*Tam Lin*, the latest addition to Terri Windling's *Fairy Tale* series, is a university novel. As in *Gaudy Night*, the college that serves as its setting is also its subject. In fact, *Tam Lin* shares a great deal with Sayers' mystery: a heroine who both desires and retreats from passion; a mystery which is central to the action but peripheral to the theme; dialogue layered with coded tensions and literary allusions; and a community of scholars corrupted at its heart. Sayers, a realist, traces this corruption to psychological origins; Dean, a fantasist, traces it to the influence of the Queen of Faerie posing as a Professor of Classics in a small Midwestern private college in the early '70s.

Structurally, *Tam Lin* is a chronological account of its heroine's college career. As a freshman, all things seem equally mysterious to Janet Carter: the Medieval allegory of *The Romance of the Rose*, the book-throwing Ericson ghost, the rude and handsome young man she meets in the library basement, the pre-med roommate who doesn't like poetry, the incredibly attractive members of the Classics department. With the help of her professor and a trained enthusiasm for language, Janet learns to make sense of the literature. The people are harder, especially the young man who becomes her lover and who, for a freshman Classics major, seems remarkably knowledgeable about Shakespeare and Jacobean drama. In the course of the next three years,

Janet studies Greek, English literature, and human relations in just about equal proportions, breaking up with the emotionally unsatisfactory Nick and finally getting pregnant by Thomas Lane, the rude young man, just in time to save him from becoming the fiery court's reind to Hell.

Much about this novel is charming. The major characters are beautifully observed, from Janet, whose head is wiser than her heart, to her two scientific roommates, one an amiable stob who reads fantasy, the other a Midwest preppie who never understands pans. Their three lovers are equally well-characterized, their mysterious histories, when they are finally revealed, both surprising and inevitable. With the exception of the aggressively ordinary Tina, the entire cast talks well, with a wealth of literary allusion and quotation that will be the delight of some readers and the despair of others. Janet and her friends have a good deal of Shakespeare by heart, and display an easy familiarity with the works of Homer, the Metaphysicals, Tournemour, and Christopher Fry that is as much a sign of their youth as of their intelligence. Readers who do not share this familiarity should know that the jokes are funny even if you don't recognize the source, and that Janet's literary meditations include enough description of the works that have inspired them to allow you to understand what's going on. Whether you will go on to sympathize with a woman who mediates all her emotional experiences through literature is another question.

Mediation—of experience, of action, of emotion—is very much a part of Dean's narrative method. A certain amount of the plot unfolds through the medium of reported performances of *Hamlet*, Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, and Tournemour's misogynistic masterpiece *The Revenger's Tragedy*, each of whose situations, characters, and themes elegantly reflect some facet of Tom Lane's ambivalent relationship with the faerie court. This solves very neatly the narrative problem posed by the ballad "Tam Lin," which reveals nothing about Elfin; but it does make Tom Lane's dangers seem oddly abstract, something more observed than felt.

Similarly, the fantastic elements are easier to see after you've

finished the book than while you're reading it. Professor Medeous' red and black hair, Blackstock's curious immunity to the political upheavals characterizing most college campuses during the early '70s, Melinda Wolfe's sumptuous feasts, the combination of hard intellect and practiced sensuality evident in the Classics Department's faculty and majors, all hint that Blackstock is, temporarily at least, a colony of Elfland. It is very well done. The problem is that the real events of the early '70s—Vietnam, Watergate, the civil rights movement, women's lib—receive only the most cursory mention. There's no contrast, no perspective of reality from which to view or assess the action. So when the Ferie Court finally makes a full-dress appearance, both the characters and the reader accept the sight of the entire Classics Department riding through the woods in fancy dress as remarkable but no more astonishing than pot parties, inadvertent pregnancies, or suicides.

The novel's resulting slight emotional flatness is exacerbated by its structure. The action unfolds slowly and discursively, as if mimicking college life where freshman year lasts twice as long as the remaining three years put together. In the course of those years, Janet notices things that seem to be significant, then turn out not to be, or at least less significant than we'd expected. Some of these red herrings are benign; some are downright irritating. In a book that is at least in part about defining love and its relationship to sex, why hint that one character is a lesbian and then leave it, and her, entirely without discussion or

resolution? What is the purpose of the battle of the bust of Schiller? Why do inconsequential characters keep drifting in and out of the action like secondary ghosts?

One answer, of course, is that college life is like that, full of unsubstantiated rumors, incomprehensible traditions, people who are intimates one month and strangers the next. Life is chaotic. Only literature is orderly. The problem is that while Janet knows this very well, her creator seems to have forgotten it. A careful reader cannot but recognize that while *Tam Lin* is literature, it is not particularly orderly. Sentence by sentence, the novel is artfully written, but as a whole, it is not artfully wrought. The pacing is slow at the beginning and almost indecently rushed at the end. And like Janet herself, *Tam Lin* flirts with complexities it then shies away from, so that although the plot is resolved, the issues it raises are pretty much left dangling. Had Dean picked them up, treated her theme and plot as carefully as she treated her characters, *Tam Lin* would have been a fine meditation on the difference between life and literature. As it stands, it is a charming and quirky portrait of college life that promises more than it ultimately delivers.

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### **The Start of the End of It All** by Carol Emshwiller San Francisco: Mercury House, 1991; \$10.95 trade pb; 204 pages reviewed by Gwyneth Jones

A lovelorn octogenarian longs to be seventy again. An elderly US tourist becomes an Indian goddess, much to the chagrin and disbelief of her husband (as he keeps reminding her, she didn't even finish college). An ex-wife returns to disrupt her husband's neat existence, equipped with a pair of huge, magnificent seagull's wings; but with an odd quip pair of blueveined legs dangling below. In the title story, an army of alienated post-menopausal womanhood aids and abets a secret and definitely nasty invasion from outer space . . . Carol Emshwiller's new collection *The Start of the End of It All* plots in many ways the start of the disintegration of the flesh and of the life: the drooping, the wrinkling, the smells, the memory lapses, the plots your children make to get you safely onto the death row of the Sunset Home. But though the real experience of aging is often the subject (and especially female aging), that doesn't restrict the scope or limit the strangeness of these narratives.

*Carmen Day*, the best known of Carol Emshwiller's books, describes a whimsical, comic and supremely natural revolution. Suddenly, women and female animals begin to merge and change places—and how obvious it seems that the beautiful, affectionate young laborer bitch can easily take the place of a wife. The world of men is bewildered, shaken to the core and benignly overturned. On the cover of this new collection *Carmen Day* is praised (by *Penthouse* magazine) for the way Emshwiller conveys the truths of feminism "painlessly." I don't imagine *The Start of the End of It All* will get the same kind of praise. Post-menopausal women are intrinsically not interesting (Emshwiller plays wryly with the idea of their invisibility). Moreover, this kind of feminism is sometimes funny but never analgesic. It doesn't stroke the reader, male or female; it does not reassure. The octogenarian lover in "There Is No Evil Angel But Love" is perhaps delivering a well-deserved comeuppance to the Oppressive Male Slob. But her iron-fisted growling to the unfortunate object of her affections rouses no sympathy. A woman's need to be needed can be an addiction, criminal and heartless as any other kind of junkiedom. The narrator of "The Start of the End of It All" will tolerate all kinds of ugliness, so long as her husband-surrogate aliens keep her supplied with dishes to wash and messes to clean up. Even when she realizes that she has been abused by the aliens as much as by her own menfolk, the story ends with a hint that the dependency axis will continue. Women are amazingly ingenious at finding new routes to doormathood.

Longsuffering is a vice: it saps your morals and destroys your

judgment. In "Emissary," the friendly alien (crippled by her unsuitable and vulnerable female flesh) admires, gushes approval: in classic woman-talk speech patterns she cannot bring herself to criticize or complain. She longs to be helpful. But it is not until (under extreme provocation) she says what she really thinks of this ruined planet that her failed mission has some slight effect. *Carmen Day* is closely echoed in one of the more conventional stories. A space-travelling trapper hunts fur on a winter planet. The planet's fur-bearing sentients contact his pointer bitch: *Little slave, what have you done that is first today?* She understands, she realises the value of what is being offered, and knows her master is a murderer. Still she finds it impossible to break away. The habit of the "dumb female" animal is too strong. *The Start of the End of It All* is a warning to nice, older ladies everywhere (the kind who'd be wearing medium heels and a flowery dress . . .) It speaks of the danger of being thankful for small mercies, the evil of never asking for much. It is a gentle book, but it incites to violence.

When you're old, one of Carol Emshwiller's narrators remarks, you have no time for long-range plans. You only have time for action. The action attempted by these diverse characters (male as well as female, young as well as old) is always "feminist" in the broader sense, in resisting the mindless pressure of convention; in abandoning or defying a fixed social order. There are no guaranteed prizes for kicking up your heels. "Mr. Draculacard" incites a bored housewife to hang from her heels in the attic, to eat chocolate from a heart-shaped box and have "something happen" for once. However, she'll still become the bat's prey. But there are obscure and alluring pleasures to be gained. In "Sex and/or Mr. Morrison" an elderly woman investigates the possibility that the acknowledged division of the sexes hides another layer of mystery (how is one to know such things, when everything is hidden?). The freedom to hide in a stranger's bedroom and spy on him undressing is only one of her reckless methods. Old age is a second, and more venturesome, childhood.

*"I've spent all night huddled under a bush in Central Park; and twice I've crawled out onto the fire escape and climbed to the roof."*

The loss of the long term is a desperate and an intoxicating freedom. Maybe it does not belong to old age alone. But—Carol Emshwiller seems to say—it's only when you're old that you will really know what it means to live on the edge. It is always risky to live in the imagination, to believe in an idea. But if you take this leap (so many of these stories feature a leap into the unknown) late in life, when the ties



that bind us all begin to loosen; then you may never return. The gull-winged wife in the story called "Pledged" is a glorious creature. Her husband bemoans the fate of his ornaments, as her great wings sweep wildly through his tidy home (normal life has no room for freedom . . .). Still he admires her passionately. But the gull-woman's eyes are empty of human feeling.

Sometimes the leap can only be taken by deciding to stay on the ground. In "The Circular Library of Stones" an amiable, slightly kooky old lady pins her faith on an imaginary archaeology: a lost city of women. Her obsession is beautiful, harmless, and a haunting metaphor for the "faith" of feminism. But given the choice between the reality of her fantasy, and the reality of normal life—even though her "normality" is a one-way ticket to the Sunset Home—she makes an unexpected decision. There comes a time when the only way you can keep a dream alive is by letting it go.

Wings, and the idea of flying. Aging, and the freedom of old age. Renunciation of the dreamworld: flight to the dreamworld . . . In "Vilchamba" a literal return from the exile of civilization to a pre-Columbian Eldorado. In "Looking Down" a conventional story (with a beginning, a middle and an end!) about an enslaved "God" who turns out, when he's struggled his way to freedom, to be a loving father, and a decent, generous husband to his human "priestess." "Living at the Center" could be a story of the same people, but again an elderly "unnecessary" woman is making a voyage of discovery that the men can only talk about.

Male characters are of course the bad guys; or at best weird, oversized semi-humans. There's a series of annoyingly stereotyped grumpy husbands. It's notable that in the one story that treats the sickness of power with compassion ("Moon Songs") the unhappy tyrant is a young woman. In "Chicken Icarus" (reminiscent of Katherine Dunn's *Gesk Love*) an isolated limbless young man, whose only

active appendage is his penis, ponders humbly on his greatest ambition: to become a fairground freak. It's almost as if Carol Emshwiller is describing her ideal male. But "Looking Down" isn't the only story to give a different perspective. In "Peri," one of the most arresting odd of these narratives (and I think my favourite) a middle-aged man experiences a strange rejuvenation when he finds himself in charge of a little girl. The man, as it happens, can walk on air—an odd little talent which he's never developed. But it's a pair of panties that makes the story for me: a fancy, sexy pair meant for a grown up lady. The child wants them, grandpa buys them. In eerie, casual defiance of current belief no harm comes of this perilous incident: no harm at all.

In her afterword to this collection, Carol Emshwiller almost denies conscious authorship. "My mind," she says, "it has always seemed to me, isn't very clever—is too pedestrian. My fingers and my typewriter seem much smarter." On this showing, taking a few fingers for a random walk across the keys is a richly profitable exercise. But I suspect it depends whose fingers. There is a subtle discipline in refusing to tell a conventionally premeditated story, refusing to let anything shape your imagination except itself. The alien in "Emissary" brings with her to planet earth (much to the bemusement of the natives) a large collection of ordinary, empty picture frames, held up around fragments of other writing's whimsical beauty. She borrows the privilege of the visual artist: simply to offer your perception, and let the audience provide the interpretation, the message. I've tried to describe something of what I saw through the frames. Other eyes will see other worlds. But please, take a look. Wander round this quiet (deceptively quiet, deceptively unassuming) gallery. Stop and stare. You'll find it worth your while. ▶

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## The Gallery of His Dreams by Kristine Kathryn Rusch

Eugene, OR: Axolotl Press Special; \$10.00 trade pb; 80 pages

reviewed by Kenneth L. Houghton

The meteoric rise of Kristine Kathryn Rusch's career is not without justification. As co-founder with Dean Wesley Smith of Pulphouse Publishing and the editor of *Pulphouse: The Hardback Magazine*, Ms. Rusch has been responsible for the first sales of several new writers, a tradition she seems bound to continue as the current editor of *POSF* (in itself a major accomplishment). In addition to having won the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer in 1989, her work frequently appears in Best of the Year collections and she has been on awards ballots both for her fiction and as an editor seemingly from the beginning of her career. She was probably the first writer since Nina Kiriki Hoffman to establish a reputation in the field without having a published novel, though her first is due to be published this fall by Roc.

The *Gallery of His Dreams*, Dean Wesley Smith assures us in his introduction, is not a vanity press publication. His discussion of Axolotl's reasons for publishing the story has an eerie resonance with Don Wollheim's more concise insistence that Terry Carr's "The Dance of the Changer and the Three" be included in the *Wellheim/Carr World's Best Science Fiction: 1969*. Mr. Smith comments on Ms. Rusch's ascending reputation within the field better than I ever could, mentions her Nebula nominations, and notes that Gardner Dozois purchased the novella (published in the September *Asimov's*) before Smith decided to publish his partner's work in this Special edition. His intentions are clearly honorable.

The story itself is a fantasy/biography of Matthew Brady, whose photographs of the War Between the States (nothing civil about it) virtually established photography as an art. (Smith calls the work an "historical science fiction novella," yet the science aspect of the story is never explained. No matter.) It is told in a series of prose snapshots, each dated by year. Ms. Rusch attempts to produce a collage of the moments.

The *Gallery of His Dreams* opens with Brady, covered in pig dung, "warn[ing] to be great—and warn[ing] to be remembered." This type of scene was cliché in musical comedies, let alone serious works of

fiction, years ago. Rusch plays it straight—indeed, it seems intended to be a moment of transcendence—and one may wonder if she is too close to her subject; Smith's introduction makes explicit the hallowed place of Brady in Rusch's pantheon.

Brady moves to New York City and, through a series of apparent coincidences, takes up photography. Although a portrait artist he has befriended damn photography as "what will clearly become a poor man's art." Brady realizes the mechanics of the camera can neutralize his lack of "the firm hand, the easy grace of a portraitist." Searching for better living through technology, Brady takes up the new craft.

Nine years later, Brady meets Juliet (or, as she prefers, Julia) Handy, "a slip of a girl"—though in her early 20s—at a dance begun given by his employer. She declares that "when a woman loves, it is her duty to love intelligently" and tells Brady she has dreamed of the greatness in his future. The shy Brady and she are soon married, and he becomes a wealthy man making portraits of "illustrious Americans" (possibly the first coffee-table book in history).

But wealth guarantees neither greatness nor remembrance. Brady determines, with President Lincoln's dispensation, to photograph the upcoming War. The opportunity "to record history," even at his own expense, entices Brady to leave his prosperous studio. He buys a wagon—inventing, as it were, the portable darkroom—and sets off with an assistant named Tim O'Sullivan to photograph the war. (Lincoln, after all, predicted the war would be over in three months.)

The (First) Battle of Bull Run, as the losers of the battle but eventual winners of the war called it, was supposed to be a quick and decisive victory. The advance p.r. was so good that several D.C. socialites brought picnic baskets to watch the Union triumph. In the most effective war scene in the novella, Rusch relates what happens when the watchmen become the watched—and then the pursued, as they race from the oncoming Rebels like extras in a *Gijyn* movie. Ms. Rusch attempts to render Brady's perspective on the scene:

This was not romantic; it was not the least bit pretty. It had cost him hundreds of dollars in equipment and might cost him his life if he didn't escape soon. This is what the history books had never told him about war, had never explained about the absolute mess, the dirt and the blood.

"This was not romantic; it was not the least bit pretty" is almost as subtle as this novella becomes and is by no means inert. Similarly the final sentence, "this is what the history books had never told him about war, had never explained about the absolute mess, the dirt and the blood," while a touch too clinical for my taste, might be considered affecting. Had this been the entire description from Brady's point of view, the scene as written would be no more, but no less, than ordinary. It's not award-winning writing, but it is certainly salable prosody.

Unfortunately, there is the matter of the intervening sentence, "It had cost him hundreds of dollars in equipment and might cost him his life if he didn't escape soon" (Italics added), introduces the issue of collateral damage at exactly the wrong moment. Worrying about monetary cost while the battle is in progress is more appropriate to that other famous wagon-bearer, Mother Courage, whose emphasis upon profits over life is why she is the sole titular survivor of Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Brady, on the other hand, is willing to sacrifice his wagon—indeed, even some of the plates which were the *raison d'être* for the entire expedition—to save his and O'Sullivan's life. Thinking of cost in terms of mere coinage is foreign to the character of Brady which Ms. Rusch limns; ignoring this makes the narrative inconsistent to the point of distraction.

Brady and O'Sullivan photograph the entire war, even to a final daguerrotype of Lee at Appomattox (misspelled "Appomatox" in this volume) the day after the surrender. For Brady, the war has been a financial disaster: his fortune is long gone, his once-prosperous studio business has been irreparably damaged by his four-year absence, and—adding insult to penury—the photographs he was certain would increase his fame and fortune are spurned, though critically acclaimed, by those whose memories of dead loved ones is too fresh. Forlorn, Brady does an exhibition of his war photographs; by 1871, he is forced to declare bankruptcy.

It is this act which sets the subplot in motion. A strangely-dressed woman—the sf reader will recognize her immediately as a time traveler—who first appeared to Brady on the field at Gettysburg returns, offering him acclaim and expenses to take some photographs for her. Brady, having rather little choice in the matter, agrees.

He is transported immediately to Hiroshima just after the Enola Gay dropped its cargo on that city's unsuspecting inhabitants. An old man calls him "American"—the wrong accent for the region and a much less likely choice of appellations than a panicked "Gaijin!" would have been. Ms. Rusch's apparent loss of concentration nearly compromises the scene. Fortunately, the reader is able to focus on Brady, now the war-torn veteran, immediately taking out his camera and photographing "the field of corpses, more horrifying than anything he had seen under the Pennsylvania sun." His action here contrasts sharply with his panic at Manassas, possibly because he does not recognize the life-threatening nature of the area. The description of the scene requires the reader to be more sensitive than the prose to the horrors of war.

Immediately after this Brady's dreams become nightmares. One factor is his dread that the woman he sees is not real. (Rusch never makes this point explicit, even extratextually; there is not even a *Quintessence* style dating of the sections to which Brady "time travels," leaving the question of her existence—and his post-1865 war photographs—rather open to the reader as well as his next.)

Brady contemplates declining his next assignment, but ultimately accedes and is transported to a My Lai-type of massacre. Brady here learns of war "where women and children died instead of soldiers." By this point the reader unwilling to accept the simplicity of Rusch's vignettes will have given up on the novella. Those who persist will find something of a progression of amorality as soldiers herd children into a church—and then burn it and them to the ground. Such a progression would be grotesquely manipulative in the hands of a master storyteller like Orson Scott Card. Ms. Rusch, hardly so accomplished yet, shows us the puppet master as well as all the strings she pulls. The final war scene—presumably from a bacterial war wherein everyone is killed

## The New York Review of Science Fiction Fall Readings at Dixon Place

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though none maimed—is horrifying in its normalcy. It is also the tableau best rendered by Ms. Rusch's straightforward narration.

In "real" time, Brady has lost his eyesight, his fortune, and his property. His work has been claimed by unscrupulous former colleagues and suppressed by a government unwilling to violate its "sacred trust" by printing positives of his work. (The Government took possession of Brady's negatives as a result of his bankruptcy.) There has even been a passing, if exaggerated, newspaper report of his death.

The final affront to Brady is Julia's death in 1887. Unable to sleep the night after the funeral, Brady "visits" the Gallery of His Dreams. The exhibit—photographs Brady has taken, both empirically and during his "travels"—is now complete. Stark, realistic scenes of death and diememberment throughout history cover the walls. Brady—whose work was "too real" immediately after the War and a remembrance of things past to the survivors a generation later—finds his photograph being viewed as "beauty" and "art" by people with no emotional attachment to their content. His benefactor attempts to reassure him that "[t]he message about war and destruction will go home in their subconscious." The use of that last term is not only inaccurate, but also anachronistic; one wonders what Brady would have made of it.

Just when all is lost and Brady left to contemplate the folly of his *hobbies*, Julia appears, as if *ex machina*—not the woman recently interred, of course, but the young woman of the dance, who spoke of his greatness-to-be. Indeed, the Gallery of His Dreams, we are told, came into being as much through her dream as through his actions. Rusch is explicit on the point: "She had made the greater sacrifice—her entire life for his dream, his vision, his work."

If this is so—we have only this sudden auctioneer's fiat as evidence—then the wrong story has been told, for the previous 70 pages have dwelt upon Matthew, not Julia. Brady's image of Julia is one of myriad unconnected dots, not even pointillism: we have seen only a childless housewife who remained devoted and never once appeared to want anything else of her husband or her life. The dream she related on page 20 is on display in this final scene, but her part in its realization is and always has been nothing more—though nothing less—than staying with and morally supporting her husband. At no point in the novella is it shown that Julia has sacrificed anything. The departure of the now-old Matthew Brady and the ever-young Julia into the sunset—or, "into a future in which he would never take part"—is unsatisfying.

There is in the end a disparity between the story Ms. Rusch has told in *The Gallery of His Dreams* and what the text claims to have accomplished. The cover of the novella is probably the most famous photograph of the War Between the States. It is an arranged shot from Gettysburg of what one quickly realizes are somewhat too orderly corpses. Although Matthew Brady posed the bodies—a point made clear in the novella—the photograph itself was taken by Tim O'Sullivan. Like that photograph, *The Gallery of His Dreams*, despite the intentions of the writer, leaves the reader more with a sense of artifice than art.

## Evolution of Horror

Continued from page 1

literary evolution, in which a parallel evolution of the ghost story and the horror story had created a rich and varied body of tropes, conventions, texts, and the horror genre was becoming established as a vigorous variety of popular literature, in rich interaction with the main body of the literature of this century ever since. One can speculate that, since the religious and superstitious beliefs had passed from overt currency in the reading public, their transformation into the subtext of horror fiction fulfilled certain desires, if not needs, in the audience and writers. As was noted in *The Dark Decent*, the most popular current of horror fiction for decades has been moral allegories of the power of evil.

The giant of the magazines of horror was *Weird Tales*, founded in 1923 and published until the 1950s (and recently revived). It was there that H. P. Lovecraft, Frank Belknap Long, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, and many others flourished. Davis Grubb, Tennessee Williams, Ray Bradbury, and other literary writers also published early work in *Weird Tales*, which was hospitable to all forms of the weird and horrific and supernatural in literature. "Up to the day the first issue of *Weird Tales* was placed on the stands, stories of the sort you read between these covers each month were taboo in the publishing world. . . . Edgar Allan Poe . . . would have searched in vain for a publisher before the advent of this magazine," said the editorial of the first anniversary issue in 1924.

One of the conditions that favors genericification is an accessible category market, and *Weird Tales* provided this, along with a letter column in which the names and addresses of correspondents was published. This allowed readers and writers to get in touch with each other, and they did. The Lovecraft circle was composed of writers, poets and readers, and generated thousands of letters among them over several decades, forming connections that lasted years after Lovecraft's death in 1937, some at least until the death of August Derleth in the 1960s. Some of the early correspondents were involved, as Lovecraft was, in the amateur journalism movement of the teens and twenties, and they generated amateur magazines and small press publications, which flourished from the 1930s to the 1960s—their descendants exist today. The World Fantasy Awards has a separate category award for excellence in fan publishing each year, and there are many nominees. So *Weird Tales* was seminal not only in creating a genre, but also in creating a field, a sub-culture of devotees.

In the 1940s and '50s, the development of the popular form continued and, through a series of historical accidents, came under the protective umbrella of the science fiction field, as did the preponderance of fantasy literature. H. P. Lovecraft and many of his circle published as well in the science fiction magazines of the 1930s. And the letter-writing sub-cultures generated by the science fiction magazines interpenetrated with the horror field, creating one body, so that by the late 1930s the active fans commonly identified themselves as fans of the fantasy fiction field.

In 1939, the great science fiction editor, John W. Campbell, Jr., whose magazine *Amazing Stories* dominated science fiction, founded a companion magazine, *Unknown*, devoted to fantasy and horror, and to modernizing the style and atmosphere of the fiction. Campbell, who had written an influential science fiction horror story in 1938, encouraged his major science fiction writers to work for his new magazine, and in the five years of its existence, *Unknown* confirmed a bond between horror and science fiction that has not been broken, a bonding that contributed to the flowering of *sf* horror movies in the fifties and encouraged a majority of the important horror writers for the next fifty years. Shirley Jackson once told me in conversation that she had a complete run of *Unknown*. "It's the best," she said. Several of Jackson's stories first appeared in the 1950s in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* (as did, for instance, one of the earliest translations of Jorge Luis Borges). Since the 1930s, a majority of the horror stories in the English language have first appeared in genre magazines.

Furthermore, a general consideration of literary examples yields several conclusions about the nature of horror. First, that horror is not in the end either a marketing category or a genre, but a literary mode that has been used in every genre and category, the creation of an atmosphere and emotional environment that sparks a trans-

action between the reader and the text which yields the horrific response. Horrific poems and plays and novels predate the inception of the short story. There can and have been western horror stories, war horror stories, ghost stories, adventure stories, mystery stories, romances—the potential exists in every category.

## II. Supernatural Men and Women

"In times when censorship or conventions operated to deter authors from dealing specifically with certain human situations, the occult provided a reservoir of images which could be used to convey symbolically what could not be presented literally."

—Glen St John Barclay, *Anatomy of Horror*.

From the 1890s onward, to a large extent under the influence of Henry James, writers such as Walter de la Mare, Edith Wharton, and others devoted significant portions of their careers to the literary ghost story. "In a certain sense, all of [James'] stories are ghost stories—evocations of a tenuous past; and his most distinguished minor work is quite baldly cast in this rather vulgar, popular form. 'The ghost story,' he wrote in one of his prefaces, 'as we for convenience call it, has ever been for me the most possible form of the fairy tale.' But at a deeper level than he consciously sought in doing his intended stories of terror (he called, we remember, even *The Turn of the Screw* 'a pathos'), James was forever closing in on the real subject that haunted him always: the necrophilia that has always so oddly been an essential part of American romance," says critic Leslie Fiedler.

At the time of his death, Henry James was writing *The Sense of the Past*, a supernatural novel in which a character named Ralph becomes obsessed with a portrait and is translated into the past as a ghost from the future. The supernatural was a major strain in the work of this great and influential writer throughout his career and, under the pressure of his Modernist admirers, has often been ignored or banished from consideration by being considered only as psychological metaphor during most of the 20th century. Freud, in his essay "The Uncanny," boils it down to "an uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs we have mounted seem once more to be confirmed." And "primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes and are, in fact, based on them." So there we have it, the primitive or infantile versus the adult and rational—the psychological. Accordingly Virginia Woolf, for example, in defending James' ghost stories, says the ghosts "have their origin within us. They are present whenever the significant overflows our powers of expressing it; whenever the ordinary appears ringed by the strange. . . . Can it be that we are afraid? . . . We are afraid of something unnamed, of something, perhaps, in ourselves." True, of course, but a defense of the metaphorical level of the text at the expense of the literal surface—which is often in James' fiction intentionally difficult to figure out.

Since the Modernists considered the supernatural a regressive and outmoded element in fiction, the contemporaries and followers of James who were strongly influenced by the literal level of his supernaturalism have been to a large extent banished from the literary canon. Most of them are women writers. A few still have critical support, such as Edith Wharton, but not on the whole for their supernatural works. Those whose best work was largely or often in the supernatural, such as Violet Hunt and Gertrude Atherton, Harriet Prescott Spofford and Mary Wilkins Freeman, have been consigned to literary history and biographical criticism, marginalized—Violet Hunt is more interesting for the men she was associated with scandalously than her writing; Atherton has ended up in the low end of the high art/mass culture divide; Spofford is forgotten or ignored as a prolific hack who once was thought of highly but who influenced only other women; Freeman is merely a local colorist. Much work has been done by scholars to reassess these and other writers in recent years, but not nearly enough yet. In the recent volume, *Horror: 100 Best Books* (1988—covering literature from Christopher Marlowe to Ramsey Campbell), five women writers were chosen for the list, omitting novelists such as Anne Radcliffe, Emily Brontë, and Ann Rice, and every short story collection by a woman ever—except Marjorie Bowen's and Lisa Tuttle's.

Horror, often cast as ghost story, was an especially useful mode for many woman writers allowing them a freedom to explore the concerns of feminism symbolically and non-rhetorically with powerful effect. Alfred Bendixen, in the introduction to his excellent anthology, *Haunted Women* (1985), says "supernatural fiction opened doors for American women writers, allowing them to move into otherwise forbidden regions. It permitted them to acknowledge the need and fears of women, enabling them to examine such 'unladylike' subjects as sexuality, bad marriages, and repression." He goes on to identify stories rescued from virtual oblivion and observe that "most of the stories . . . come from the 1890s and early 1900s—a period when the feminist ghostly tale attracted the talents of the finest women writers in America and resulted in some of their most powerful and intriguing work." Alan Ryan, in his excellent anthology *Haunting Women* (1988), adds the work of Ellen Glasgow, May Sinclair, Jean Rhys, and Isak Dinesen, extending the list into the present with works by Hettie Calisher, Muriel Spark, Ruth Rendell and others. "One recurring theme," says Ryan, ". . . is a female character's fear of a domineering man, who may be father, husband, or lover."

Richard Dalby, in the preface to his *Victorian Ghost Stories by Eminent Women Writers* (1988) [from Charlotte Brontë to Willa Cather], claims that "over the past 150 years Britain has led the world in the art of the classic ghost story, and it is no exaggeration to state that at least fifty percent of quality examples in the genre were by women writers." And in the introduction to that same volume, Jennifer Uglow observes, "although—perhaps because—they were written as unpretentious entertainments, ghost stories seemed to give their writers a license to experiment, to push the boundaries of fiction a little further. . . . Again and again we find that the machinery of this most conventional genre frees, rather than restricts, the women who use it."

An investigation of the horror fiction of the 19th and early 20th century reveals that a preponderance of the supernatural fiction was written by women and that, buried in the works of a number of women writers whose fiction has been ignored or excluded from the literary canon, there exist significant landmarks in the evolution of horror.

Harriet Prescott Spofford, for instance, is emerging as one of the major links between Poe and the later body of American women writers. Gertrude Atherton's "The Bell in the Fog" is both an homage to and critique of Henry James—and perhaps an influence on *The Sense of the Past*. It is provocative to wonder, since women were marginalized in English and American society, and since popular women writers were the most common producers of supernatural fiction, ghostly or horrific, whether supernatural fiction was not in part made marginal because of its association with women and feminine concerns. Just as James (except for *The Turn of Mind Series*) was ignored as a writer of supernatural fiction for most of the Modernist era (the stories considered exclusively as psychological metaphor), so were most of the women who wrote in that mode in the age of electricity—and not, when we look at the stories, because they were innocent of psychological metaphor. But the flame still burns, can illuminate, can heat the emotions.

In the contemporary period, much of the most popular horror is read by women (more than 60% of the adult audience is women in their thirties and forties, according to the most recent Gallup poll surveys of reading). Bestselling horror most often addresses the traditional concerns of women (children, houses, evil in the world), as well as portraying vividly the place of women and their treatment in society.

Intriguingly, the same Gallup poll indicates that in the teenage readership, an insignificant percentage of girls read horror. The teenage audience is almost exclusively male. Perhaps this is because a very large amount of genre horror fiction (that is published in much smaller numbers of copies than bestselling horrific fiction) is extremely graphic and characteristically features extensive violence, often sexual abuse, torture, or mutilation of women alive, who then return for supernatural vengeance and hurt men. One wonders if this is characteristic of boys' concerns.

I. P. Hartley, in the introduction to Cynthia Asquith's anthology, *The Third Ghost Book* (1955), remarked, "Even the most impassioned devotee of the ghost story would admit that the taste for it is slightly abnormal, a survival, perhaps, from adolescence, a disease of deficiency suffered by those whose lives and imaginations do not react satisfactorily to normal experience and require an extra thrill." And a more recent

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### III. The Sublime Transaction

"The sublime provided a theory of terror in literature and the other arts."

—Carl Woodring, *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*

"Supernatural horror, in all its bizarre constructions, enables a reader to taste a selection of treats at odds with his well-being. Admittedly, this is not an indulgence likely to find universal favor. True misanthropists are as rare as poets and form a secret society unto themselves, if only because their memberships elsewhere were cancelled, some of them from the moment of birth. But those who have sampled these joys marginal to stable existence, once they have gotten a good whiff of other worlds, will not be able to stay away for long. They will loiter in moonlight, eyeing the entrances to cemeteries, waiting for some terribly propitious moment to crash the gates."

—Thomas Ligotti, "Professor Nobody's Little Lectures on Supernatural Horror."

The transaction between reader and text that creates the horrific is complex and to a certain extent subjective. Although the horrifying event may be quite overt, a death, a ghost, a monster, it is not the event itself but the style and atmosphere surrounding it that create horror, an atmosphere that suggests a greater awe and fear, wider and deeper than the event itself. "Because these ideas find proper expression in heightened language, the practiced reader of tales in our genre comes to feel not merely the shiver of fear, but the shiver of aesthetic seizure. In a superior story, there is a sentence, a word, a thing described, which is the high point of the preparation of the resolution. Here disquiet and vision unite to strike a powerful blow," said Jacques Barzun. M. R. James said that the core of the ghost story is "those things that can hardly be put into words and that sound rather foolish if they are not properly expressed." Literary history and criticism tell us to look to the sublime to illuminate some of the sources of horror's power.

There was a time in our culture when the sublime was the goal of art, the Romantic era. Poetry, drama, prose fiction, painting strove to embody it. Horror was one of its components. Carl Woodring, summarizing the subject in *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, says: "As did the scholars of tragedy, [Edmund] Burke and others who analyzed the sublime asked why such awe-inspiring gave pleasure when it might be expected to evoke only fear or abhorrence. Immanuel Kant, in the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), explained: Whereas the beautiful is limited, the sublime is limitless, so that the mind in the presence of the sublime, attempting to imagine what it cannot, has pain in the failure but pleasure in contemplating the immensity of the attempt. Kant noted that the sublime could be mathematical—whereby the mind imagines a magnitude by comparison with which everything in experience is small—or it could be dynamic—whereby power or might, as in hurricanes or volcanoes, can be pleasurable rather than frightening if we are safe from the threat of destruction."

One response to this aesthetic was the rise of Gothic fiction in England and America, and in Germany, "the fantastic." Jacques Barzun gives an eloquent summary of this period in his essay, "Romanticism," in the aforementioned *Penguin Encyclopedia*. "What is not in doubt is the influence of this literature. It established a taste for the uncanny that has survived all the temporary realisms and naturalisms and is once

again in high favor, not simply in the form of tales of horror and fantasy, but also as an ingredient of the 'straight' novel." He goes on to discuss at length the fantastic, the Symbolist aspect of Romanticism, tracing its crucial import in the works of major literary figures in England, France and America. Here, if anywhere, is the genesis of horror fiction.

### IV. Aesthetic Seizures

"If the short story of the supernatural is often considered as an 'inferior' literary genre, this is to a great extent due to the works of those authors to whom preternatural was synonymous with horror of the worst kind. To many writers the supernatural was merely a pretext for describing such things as they would never have dared to mention in terms of reality. To others the short story of the supernatural was but an outlet for unpleasant neurotic tendencies, and they chose unconsciously the most hideous symbols. . . . It is indeed a difficult task to rehabilitate the pure tale of horror and even harder, perhaps, for a lover of weird fiction, for pure horror has done much to discredit it."

—Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction*

Horror comes from material on the edge of repression, according to the French critic, Julia Kristeva, material we cannot confront directly because it is so threatening to our minds and emotional balances, material to which we can gain access only through literary indirection, through metaphor and symbol. Horror conjoins the cosmic or transcendental and the deeply personal. Individual reactions to horror fiction vary widely, since in some readers minds the material is entirely repressed and therefore the emotional response entirely inaccessible.

But as Freud remarked in his essay on the uncanny, horror shares with humor the aspect of recognition—even if an individual does not respond with the intended emotional response, he or she recognizes that that material is supposed to be humorous or horrific. Indeed, one common response to horror that does not horrify is laughter. Note again the M. R. James comment about things that sound rather foolish if not properly handled in horror fiction.

The experience of seeing an audience of teenage boys at the movies laugh uproariously at a brutal and grotesque horror film is not uncommon. I have taught horror literature to young students who confess some emotional disturbance late in the course at the authentic reaction of fear and awe beginning to replace the dark humor that was previously their reaction to most horror.

Boris Karloff remarked, in discussing his preferred term for the genre, "horror carries with it a connotation of revelation which has nothing to do with clean terror." Material on the edge of repression is often dismissed as dirty, pornographic. It is not unusual to see condemnations of genre horror on cultural or moral grounds. Certain horror material is banned in Britain. One need only look at the recent fuss over Bret Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (1990) to see these issues in the foreground in the mainstream.

And I have spoken to writers, such as David Morrell, who confess to laughing aloud during the process of composition when writing a particularly horrific scene—which I interpret as an essential psychological distancing device for a writer aware of confronting dangerous material. L. P. Hartley, in the introduction to his first collection, *Night Fears* (1924) said: "To put these down on paper gives relief. . . . It is a kind of insurance against the future. When we have imagined the worst that can happen, and embodied it in a story, we feel we have stolen a march of fate, inoculated ourselves, as it were, against disaster." Peter Penzoldt, in his book, *The Supernatural in Fiction*, concurs: ". . . the weird tale is primarily a means of overcoming certain fears in the most agreeable fashion. These fears are represented by the skillful author as pure fantasy, though in fact they are only too firmly founded in some repression. . . . Thus a healthy-minded even if very imaginative person will benefit more from the reading of weird fiction than a neurotic, to whom it will only be able to give a momentary relief."

There is a fine border between the horrific and the absurdly fantastic that generates much fruitful tension in the literature, and

indeed deflates the effect when handled indelicately. Those who never read horror for pleasure, but feel the need to condemn those who do, like to point to the worst examples as representative of the genre. Others laugh. But the stories that have gained reputations for quality in the literature have for most readers generated that aesthetic seizure which is the hallmark of sublime horror.

#### V. Category, Genre, Mode

"... stories of the supernatural—even the subtlest—are accessible to the common reader; they make fewer demands on the intellect than on the sensibility."

—Jacques Barzun, Introduction to *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*

"Genres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact."

—Frederic Jameson, *Magical Narratives*

"A category is a contract between a publisher and a distribution system."

—Kathryn Cramer, (unpublished Diss.)

"... one thing we know is real: horror. It is so real, in fact, that we cannot quite be sure that it couldn't exist without us. Yes, it needs our imaginations and our awareness, but it does not ask or require our consent to use them. Indeed, both at the individual and collective levels, horror operates with an eerie autonomy."

—Thomas Ligotti, "Professor Nobody's Little Lectures on Supernatural Horror"

Sir Walter Scott, to whom some attribute the creation of the first supernatural story in English, said, "The supernatural . . . is peculiarly subject to be exhausted by coarse handling and repeated pressure. It is also of a character which is extremely difficult to sustain and of which a very small proportion may be said to be better than the whole." This observation, while true, has certainly created an enduring environment in which critics can, if they choose, judge the literature by its worst examples. The most recent announcement of the death of horror literature occurs in Walter Kendrick's *The Thrill of Fear* (1991), which demise Kendrick attributes to the genericization of the literature as exemplified by the founding of *Weird Tales*: "Weird Tales helped to create the notion of an entertainment cult by publishing stories that only a few readers would like, hoping they would like them fiercely. There was nothing new to cultism, but it came fresh to horror. Nowiniciates learned to adore a sensation, not a person or a creed, and the ephemeral embarked on its strange journey from worthlessness to great price." . . . "By about 1930, scary entertainment had amassed its full inventory of effects. It had recognized its history, begun to establish a canon, and even started rebelling against the stultification canons bring. Horrid stories would continue to flourish; they would spawn a score of sub-types, including science-fiction and fantasy tales. . . ." But three lines later he ends his discussion of literature, and his chapter, by declaring that by 1940, films had taken over from literature the job of scary entertainment. This evolution marches on and literature is no longer the fittest. It seems to me very like saying that lyric poetry is alive and well in pop music.

That an intelligent critic could find nothing worthwhile to say about horror in literature beyond the creation of the genre is astonishing in one sense (it betrays a certain ignorance), but in other ways not surprising. Once horror became a genre (as, under the influence of Dickens in the mid-19th century, had the ghost story told at Christmas), it became in the hands of many writers a commercial exercise first and foremost. One might, upon superficial examination, not perceive the serious aesthetic debates raging among many of the better writers, from those of the Lovecraft circle, to Campbell's new vision in *Unknown*, to today's discussions among Stephen King, Peter Straub, Ramsey Campbell, David Morrell, Karl Edward Wagner, and others on such topics as violence, formal innovation,

appropriate style (regardless of current literary fashion), and many others. That money and popularity was a serious consideration for Poe and Dickens, as well as King and Straub, does not devalue them aesthetically. Never mind that Henry James was distraught that he was not more popular and commercial, and expressed outrage at "those damned scabbling women" who outsold him—even his so-called "potheoliers."

The curious lie concealed in James' last phrase (which he used to describe "The Turn of the Screw"), and in the public protestations of many writers before and since, up to Stephen King, today, is illuminated by Julia Briggs, in her 1977 book *Night Visitors*. She states her opinion, based upon wide reading and study, that the supernatural horror story "appealed to serious writers largely because it invited a concern with the profoundest issues: the relationship between life and death, the body and the soul, man and his universe and the philosophical conditions of that universe, the nature of evil. . . . It could be made to embody symbolically hopes and fears too deep and too important to be expressed more directly." She then goes on to say, "The fact that authors often disclaimed any serious intention. . . . may paradoxically support this view. The revealing nature of fantastic and imaginative writing has encouraged its exponents to cover their tracks, either by self-deception or other forms of retraction. The assertion of the author's detachment from his work may reasonably arouse the suspicion that he is less detached than he supposes." Many writers have contradicted themselves in print over their serious intentions. It is almost a cliché to students of genre literature, and occurs almost as frequently in all literary forms, especially if a writer is working in an unfashionable mode.

To further complicate the matter, the marketing of literature in the twentieth century has become a matter of categories established by publishers upon analogy with the genre magazines. Whereas a piece of genre horror implies a contract between the writer and the audience, the marketing category of horror implies that the publisher will provide to the distribution system as certain quantity of product to fill certain display slots. Such material may or may not fulfill the genre contract. If it does not, it will be packaged to invoke its similarity to genre material and will be indistinguishable to the distribution system from material that does. As we discussed above, horror itself may exist in any genre as a literary mode, and, as a mode, is in the end an enemy of categorization and genericization.

I have previously discussed, in the introduction to *The Dark Descent*, my observations that horror literature occurs in three main currents: the moral allegory, which deals with manifest evil; the investigation of abnormal psychology through metaphor and symbol; the fantastic, which creates a world of radical doubt and dread. Whether one or another of those currents is dominant in an individual work does not exclude the presence or intermingling of the others. Horror literature operates with an "eclectic autonomy" not only without regard to the reader, as Ligotti says, but without regard to the marketing system. Critic Gary Wolfe's observation that "horror is the only genre named for its effect on the reader" should suggest that the normal usage of genre is somewhat suspect here.

These topics of discussion have been presented to provoke further thought and study of the ways in which horror functions and has functioned in literature. It seems clear that questions regarding who reads horror and what do they get out of it (like the question of who reads pornography or science fiction or the woman's romance, and why) are worth more investigation. It also seems evident that the category/genre/mode distinctions need to be in the forefront of a commentator's consciousness. The connection between supernatural literature and the cultural changes in the 19th and 20th centuries is worth at least a book-length study.

In closing, I wish to mention my indebtedness to Kathryn Cramer for sharing with me her unpublished MA dissertation in progress, and the associated research materials which included the Gallup poll, and for discussion and critique of the category and genre distinctions and of the Henry James portions of this piece in particular. ▀

*The preceding will appear in slightly different form as the introduction to Foundations of Fear (Tor, 1992).*

**The Empire of Fear by Brian Stableford**  
New York: Carroll & Graf, 1991; \$20.95 hc; 386 pages  
reviewed by James Cappel

Brian Stableford's *The Empire of Fear*, published in England in 1988 and now brought out in the United States in a handsome volume from Carroll and Graf, is an extremely unconventional vampire story—so much so that some refuse to call it a vampire novel at all. Though it may well be more accurate to say that *The Empire of Fear* is an alternate history with vampires, Stableford plays so systematically with the conventions of the vampire fiction, inverting and twisting virtually all of the usual tropes, that the result is a milestone for the genre.

Stableford's alternate history involves one simple change, with all its complex ramifications, from actuality. Long ago, vampirism arose in Africa. It spread to Asia, reaching Europe in the fifth century, when Attila overran Rome. By the time the story begins, in 1623, European history has run substantially the course it actually did, save only that the vampires—specifically Attila and Charlemagne—have ruled Europe for more than a millennium.

Some features of our actual history are little changed. Machiavelli can still write his *Vampire Prince* and there is still enough hostility between Christendom and Islam for the Crusades to have occurred (although its basis is the Mohammedan intolerance of vampirism). Other changes are much more striking. England, or "Grand Normandy," is still ruled by Richard Lionheart, who thus has reigned for 434 years at the beginning of the novel, to the exasperation of his brother John. Europe is divided into Gaul and Walachia (presumably the successor states to the Western and Eastern Roman Empires). The Reformation apparently never occurred so that even in 1623 the Church and the Inquisition hold sway. So little, indeed, are vampires affected by the crucifix in Stableford's world that there is actually a vampire Pope—the Borgia Alexander, naturally. And so on.

The most striking departure is not from actuality, however, but from the conventions of vampire fiction. Stableford put the matter very clearly in an interview in *Locus*:

[I]t seemed to me that if there were going to be beings of this kind—long-lived, difficult to destroy—they would not be lone fugitives like Dracula, always living in fear of hordes of Van Helsing's. They would be aristocracy, the people running the world.

("Brian Stableford: The Science of Fear," *Locus* 27:2 [August, 1991], p. 5)

Vampire rule over "common men," or humans who are not vampires, is as oppressive as its real-world counterpart, and gives rise to the same kind of revolutionary pressures. The struggle against it provides the plot of *The Empire of Fear*.

The battle lines are clear from the outset. The first of the book's six parts is the story of Edmund Cordery, mechanician and friend of Francis Bacon, and his investigations with the newly invented microscope into vampire nature.

Vampire rule is "founded as much in fear and superstition as in their nature." Vampires are secretive about their history and propagation, cloaking the making of new vampires in legends of a Witches' Sabbat replete with "unnatural sexual intercourse" with Satan. Edmund's researches into blood and semen with the microscope, however, have convinced him that science can not only reveal the secret of vampirism but make it available to every common man. He succeeds only in killing himself and his vampire lover, Carmilla Bourdillon (the understated allusion is typical of Stableford), but the political subtext is unmistakable, especially in light of the explicit association of Edmund with another failed revolutionary, Guy Fawkes.

In Part Two, under the protection of the monk Quintus at the abbey of Cardigan, in Wales, Noell Cordery continues his father's researches with the microscope and initiates his own into vampirism. Of course, events do not permit him to remain there long: the abbey is visited by a notorious pirate, one Langoisse, an implacable enemy of vampires who longs to become a vampire himself. Langoisse's presence brings the vampires down on the abbey, and Noell barely escapes to the

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high seas along with Quintus and Langoisse's party. In the course of these events, Noell feels the first conflicting stirrings of desire, for Langoisse's party includes a gypsy woman, Leilah, a vampire, and the Lady Cristelle d'Urfé, and her lady in waiting.

Once Noell leaves England, the novel shifts radically in tone and content. The third part opens nineteen years after the escape from Cardigan. Noell and Quintus have set up an outpost on the western shore of Africa, where they are middlemen in the gold, ivory, and pepper trades and are visited periodically by Langoisse and Leilah. Their longstanding curiosity about the African vampires is soon to be satisfied when one of those vampires, Ghendwa, appears at the compound to guide Noell and Quintus to the legendary city of the vampires, lost Adamawara. After debate, Noell and Quintus decide to accept this summons, and set off for Adamawara. Thus, the bulk of this ostensibly vampire novel is in fact taken up with Noell's expedition to the heart of darkness to discover the secret of vampirism.

Although there is much danger in the journey—hostile tribes, extreme privations, a disease called the silver death (which is not silver and seldom kills)—and only the major characters reach Adamawara, this part of the book is remarkable for its subtler, more contemplative features: the splendid descriptions of the beautiful and terrible African countryside; the continuing philosophical discussions; most of all, the extreme sensitivity in the portrayal of Uruba culture and its differences from European culture.

Much of the story is told from the viewpoint of an African youth, Ntiki, who lives in the compound but who is *Ogbene*—a member of a secret society that assists the vampires and hopes to join their ranks eventually. This narrative choice makes the clash of cultures especially sharp.

The nucleus of the party finally reaches the vicinity of Adamawara, only to have a terrifying encounter with *Egwagwu*, the god of death—signifying that Adamawara is the realm of death. When next we see them, at the beginning of Part Four, Noell is recuperating from the silver death. He is subjected to a "season of dreams," in which he travels through space and time, witnessing the vampire sabbat, seeing famous vampires, and coupling with Carmilla and Cristelle. These sexual dreams are apparently his first intercourse. Recovering, Noell takes up the microscope again, and discovers an ambiguous clue to vampire nature in a sample of his own flesh afflicted with the silver death.

In the words of Kantibih, their Persian vampire keeper, the travelers are "prisoners of circumstance" in Adamawara, unable to leave during the rainy season. They do not wish to leave, though, until they witness the Adamawaran vampire sabbat, which they and we do in an extended scene of horrific power. Observing, dispassionately, that the ceremony of vampire creation involves ritual penile mutilation and anointing with a mysterious substance, Noell finally deduces the secret of the transmission of vampirism. Once the Adamawaran suspect he has done so, their lives are in danger, and they flee at last.

The fifth part takes up the narrative after another hiatus of eighteen years. Noell has indeed discovered the secret of vampirism, and has busied himself in creating new vampires throughout Europe. This effort to free common men from vampire rule has met with conspicuous success in England, where newly vampirized common men have overthrown Richard Lionheart and established a Protectorate under Sir Kenelm Digby. (This is one respect in which Stableford's novel is a vast improvement on reality.) Noell's African party is now besieged in the walled city of Mdina, on Malta, whose pirates had long befriended Langoisse and had played a central role in the new dispensation.

This part begins not with Noell but with the vampire attackers, chief among whom is Vlad Tepes, the warlord of Walachia. So caught up are we in the impending events, and so acclimated to the unique features of Stableford's vampires, that it takes a page or so before we realize the coup Stableford has pulled off. With breathtaking audacity, he has fashioned a framework in which Vlad the Impaler can appear as a literal vampire!

The siege of Mdina gives Stableford several more opportunities to indulge in pure adventure writing, showing off one of his special

strengths—his ability to present logistically complex material very clearly. This is particularly in evidence in the sea battle that opens the action, in which Languishe valiantly strives to hold off a vampire armada; it is hardly less in evidence throughout the assault on Mdina.

The brief final part, in which the action shifts to 1983, is a pendant to the brief first part: as the first told the story of Noell's father, Edmund Cordery, the last tells the story of Noell's spiritual successor, Michael Southerne. Noell has triumphed: vampirism, or "emortality," is now the norm except for those few who are "immune" to the DNA alteration that emortality has been discovered to be. Michael Southerne is one of the few, and, crippled and suffering from cancer, knows that he does not have long to live in a world of immortals. We see him estranged from all about him, especially his father. Michael lives in Nova Scotia in the "New Atlantis" (as the North American continent is named, in homage to Edmund Cordery's friend Francis Bacon). He is taken in by Lillah, who conveniently lives nearby, and who reconciles him with his lot.

*The Empire of Fear* is a long and eventful book. But its absorbing narrative is only one of its merits. Stableford is an adept stylist, varying pace and tone so as to present the appearance of at least three different books. The fast-moving sieges of Europe—of the abbey and of Mdina—offer exciting adventure stories in the manner of Stevenson or Sabatini, while the central African chapters aim in the direction of Conrad more than Haggard. The final chapter, with its ironic treatment of the theme of Last Man on Earth in a world of vampires, appropriately takes an overt philosophical turn. The difference here is one of style rather than content: Stableford unobtrusively interpolates philosophical reflections throughout, adding depth to the book without distracting the reader from the action. Thus, a great deal of necessary exposition is offered at the beginning in the form of a disquisition between Edmund and Noell; more information about vampires and speculation about their nature comes by way of the books Noell studies at Cardigan; and Noell, Quintus, Languishe, even Draguyla and Richard constantly talk about the nature and destiny of vampires and their differences from common men.

The most interesting and original aspect of *The Empire of Fear* is its treatment of the conventions of vampire fiction. Traditional vampire fiction was codified in *Dracula*, of course, and its conventions have been worked nearly to death by now. Stableford's creatures partake of just enough traditional characteristics to be recognizable as vampires. They suck blood, though only in small quantities and not as nourishment. They suck from the chest rather than the neck (in this Stableford follows the folklore rather than the literary tradition, though it must be admitted that not even the irrepressible Stoker could have gotten away with having *Dracula* suck young women's breasts). They are nobles, but are not confined in exotic castles. They can be killed, it is said, only by staking and decapitation, but this is clearly untrue, since it is known that they can be killed by plague. They do not like being on the high seas.

But in almost every other respect, they are very different from and much more interesting than the denizens of the B movies.

Most important, as Stableford stressed in the *Locus* interview previously cited, these vampires are not isolated misfits, but *social beings* who have used their superior power to achieve rule over common men. Clearly Stableford has touched on a core implausibility of the literary vampire tradition—one that runs so deep that it arguably defines the tradition. I am not aware of any other vampire fiction that treats vampires as tantamount to a distinct social class. But Stableford then adds a second, even *finer* insight. He has chosen his period with wonderful novelistic cunning. Except for the last part, the book takes place between 1623 and 1660, the period of greatest ferment in Europe, particularly England, against monarchy and Church. Stableford sees that virtually no change other than the fact of vampirism is needed for the vampire social order to be the one that organized Europe up through the seventeenth century. Thus the effort to free humanity from the shackles of vampirism mirrors the actual effort to liberate the nascent middle class from irrational forces. The same institutions that supported and opposed seventeenth-century nobility support and oppose vampires—the Church, ignorance, and superstition on the one hand, and science, technology, and the attendant rationalization of production and rise of the bourgeoisie on the other. This is most explicit at the beginning, in the figure of Edmund Cordery who raises the banner of science in favor of common men and against superstition and stagnation. In the *Locus* interview, Stableford made this point as well:

I wanted to look at what would happen then, if Europe had this aristocracy of vampires, ruling not so much because of their power (they're not so very numerous) but because their subjects think they're a higher kind of being, that they're magical, and they have all kinds of mystique. Then science comes along, and people begin to think maybe everybody could be that way if we found out how it was done (Stableford, p. 5).

The operative word in this quote is not "vampires" but "aristocracy." It is not too much to say that Stableford's vampires consist of a ruling class set over the rest of humanity. Humans who are not vampires are even called "common men." Vampirism is a direct metaphor for the activity of the privileged before the English revolutions of the seventeenth century, who lived by sucking the lifeblood out of "common men." It can hardly be an accident that England is still ruled by Richard Lionheart under the dead hand of a medieval code of chivalry. Yet the Corderys see that vampirism contains the seeds of its own transcendence. Instead of people fleeing vampires and trying to avoid their touch at all costs, here people *aspire* to be vampires. Human liberation is the transformation, or transfiguration, into vampirism.

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I'm not suggesting a vulgar Marxist reading of *Stableford*. The *Empire of Fear* is not a political tract. But it is clear, especially from the early chapters and from Stableford's comments, that the thematic core of the book is its social and political content, a fact that sets it apart from virtually anything else in the genre.

Stableford's treatment of the other core conventions of vampire literature is equally subversive. The most important such convention is sexuality. The sexual subtext of a vampire story is seldom buried more deeply than the vampire itself. Vampires even reproduce by bloodsucking. (This makes it curious, of course, that although vampires prefer the blood of women they are overwhelmingly male in number. Nonetheless, we can carry the basic sexual imagery all the way through to the level of bloodsucking-as-impregnation.) The *Empire of Fear* is shot through with sex, but its sexuality is unexpected at every turn. The most conventional aspect of sexual relations here is that female vampires regularly take common male lovers. The explanation, however, is unconventional: vampirism causes sterility and decreased libido, if not impotence, in males. Where vampirism is all too typically a metaphor for unbefilled male sexuality, it is here nearly a metaphor for castration. Indeed, the vampires of Adamawa reproduce by literal partial castration. The vampires of Europe, on the other hand, reproduce by "unconventional sexual intercourse," i.e., homosexuality. There is much truth at least in the tales of the Devil's Sabbath. If there is also a certain misogyny in European vampire society, mirrored by the fact that three of the first four characters to die violently in the book are women, this is not so far, after all, from historical realities.

The final part deserves separate mention. On first reading, it may appear tacked on solely to provide a naturalistic explanation for vampirism. The explanation is ingenious, but one might feel that the impulse to supply it is an unnecessary bid to gain the imprimatur of hard science fiction. The final chapter deals explicitly with two themes that are necessary to conclude the book, however: the immortality and the alienness of vampires. Throughout the book, a recurrent objection to the Cordery's program was: What will happen to humanity if we all become vampires? When addressed to Noell the question was literal, but the problem of how vampires could feed in a world without

common men has long since been solved. What remains is the larger question: What will people be like when they are all vampires?

With the triumph of immortality the aliens have become the norm. The true alien in the 1983 of *The Empire of Fear* is Michael Southerne, who is, in fact, alienated from everybody he encounters. The difference he feels most acutely, of course, is his mortality. Vampire immortality was supposed by Edmund Cordery to explain their timidity and resistance to change and innovation. Noell, judging on the basis of his relations with Berenike, supposed it to lead to a kind of fleecing away of the personality. (Upon learning that Berenike is still alive in 1983, Leilah comments: "Poor Berenike. Lost in time and lost in mind. We are not yet ready to live forever, though we may yet learn.") But Noell speculated that Berenike's mind deteriorated only because she allowed it to, and the continuing vitality of the "young Darwin," who is collaborating with Michael's father on a galactic theory of evolution, tends to prove him right.

Leilah is the ultimate proof. Almost four hundred years old at this point, Leilah takes Michael to her bed in possibly the only episode of orthodox sexual intercourse in the entire book. This is a communion in the Joycean sense—a sharing that marks the participants as members of a community. (It is also a communion in an ironic treatment of the Catholic sense, since it involves the drinking of blood.) It leads Michael to a final affirmation of his condition and welcomes him into a community, that of human beings whether mortal or not, to which he had not believed he belonged. It is Leilah, too, who points out to Michael that mortality, with its gifts of long life and freedom from pain, is not necessary for happiness. As she puts it, common men and women have been happy and "felt no loss in what they never gained."

*The Empire of Fear* does not drive a stake through the heart of conventional vampire fiction; nothing could do that. I am not sure that it will even influence vampire fiction appreciably; I cannot imagine a sequel, let alone the obligatory trilogy, or even stories by other writers based on Stableford's premises. But it is a unique and powerful book that readers and writers alike should not ignore. ▶

James Caggio lives in Brooklyn.

## American Psycho by Bret Easton Ellis

New York: Vintage Contemporaries, March, 1991; \$11.00 trade pb.; 399 pp.

reviewed by Gordon Van Gelder

It begins boldly, thrusting us into its world, defying us to define ourselves. *Who are you?* "I'm resourceful. . . I'm creative, I'm young, unscrupulous, highly motivated, highly skilled. . . society cannot afford to lose me." (p. 3) *Who are you?* "I [W]e have to end apartheid. . . slow down the nuclear arms race, stop terrorism and world hunger. Ensure a strong national defense, prevent the spread of communism in Central America, work for a Middle East peace settlement, prevent U.S. military involvement overseas." (p. 15) *Who are you?* "I'm the only one who saw Stash take the piece of sushi from his plate and slip it into the pocket of his olive green leather bomber jacket. When I mention this to Evelyn. . . she gives me a look so hateful that it seems doubtful we will have sex later on tonight." (p. 17) *Who are you?* "I'm wearing a lightweight linen suit with pleated trousers, a cotton shirt, a dotted silk tie, all by Valentino Couture, and perforated cat-toe leather shoes by Allen-Edmonds." (p. 31)

With this third novel, literary enfant Bret Ellis has taken on a prevalent subject in contemporary genre literature—the serial killer. Though not billed as "horror" fiction, *American Psycho* brings such vehement protest that it appeared as though the novel would alter America, raze the literary landscape, strike society's core. Unfortunately, the book's initial promise peters out. Unreality undoes the novel.

Unlike most serial killers currently inhabiting bookstore shelves, Patrick Bateman is wealthy, bright, gorgeous and witty. He's the American Dream. His girlfriend Evelyn calls him The Boy Next Door. He owns society's best toys, and only its best. One might view this book as an ongoing portrait of the serial killer as a young man—his

world and its people, his couplings and his killings and his conversations. Detail on detail glints off of the surfaces of this world, reflecting its brands and designs.

Bateman, our unreliable narrator, is compelling. Occasionally, his straightforward descriptions of what he does to people and his smugly-ignorant attempts at rock criticism bring on intimidating chills. The sex and horror scenes attain the pornographic power they seek, but go no further, and writers such as John Skipp and Craig Spector and Dan Simmons need not worry that Mr. Ellis will displace them as masters of graphic violence. Spelled out in clear detail, the scenes in *American Psycho* of carnage committed upon women, beggars, and a business competitor lack the tactile terror that genre writers from Somerset to Schow can convey. Terror's flavors and scents do not spice up *American Psycho*; the colors and feelings of fear aren't made vibrant in the reader's mind—though they certainly go beyond the ordinary limits of non-genre fiction, and do occasionally etch their images in acid on the reader's mind. But more than just suffering from an occasional lack of tangibility, the text col-lapses beneath the weight of errant and ineffectual details. For example, here's a description of a rat Bateman captures, abuses, and inflicts upon a human victim:

The rat hurls itself against the glass cage as I move it from the kitchen into the living room. It refused to eat what was left of the other rat I had brought it to play with last week, that now lies dead, rotting in a corner of the cage. (For the last five days I've purposefully starved it.) I set the glass cage down next to the girl and maybe because of the scent of the cheese the rat

seems to go insane, first running in circles, mewling, then trying to heave its body, weak with hunger, over the side of the cage. (pp. 328-329)

Mewling? Heaving its body over the side of the cage? Inaccurate and imprecise details such as these abound throughout the book like birds congregating on a rhino's back (to employ an equally inaccurate image).

A catalog of the inconsistencies and errors in *American Psycho* could fill half this magazine. Many of these details serve as indications of Bateman's disturbed state, but eventually the reader rebels. The birds break the rhino's back. From minor matters such as brilliant Bateman's dumb habit of renting *The Toolbox Murders* night after night when he could buy it for ten dollars (particularly noteworthy since Bateman relates his embarrassment at renting the movie) to major inconsistencies in the behavior of the characters surrounding Bateman, it all becomes too much. Homeless men and ads for *Les Misérables* appear as the text demands, minor characters (particularly women) turn like vanes to meet the changing winds of Bateman's need. Police appear once, in a scene that reads as though it is meant to be realistic. *The world of American Psycho resembles no known world.* It does not resemble the Manhattan in which I live; it does not resemble the Manhattan in which Patrick Bateman lives. It cannot hold. Unreality triumphs.

Were this inconsistency a focus of the text, the book might make

for a fascinating fictional experience. Instead, it prevents us from evaluating either the society or the psycho. Yes, people fail to see Bateman beneath his Armani and Garrick Anderson labels; that point comes across clearly. But because we cannot ultimately recognize the world that made the madman, the text's relevance dissipates and we can only conclude (for having been unable to evaluate otherwise) that, yes, society *can* afford to lose such people as those we first encounter. The initial question *Who are you?* proves only to be the text (not Bateman) repeating *me me me* before our eyes. As such, it is compelling, though it never evokes the gut-level fear that genre writers such as Robert Bloch and Jim Thompson have conveyed in their empathic portraits of psychotic mentalities. The reader cannot tell if Bateman is meant to speak to something inside us all, or if he is supposed to show us how the privileged youths of *Les Than Zero* have matured. Ultimately, the accuracy of certain details—the fact that Bateman's brother is a protagonist from *The Rules of Attraction*, the strident consistency of Bateman's age and stage in life—suggest the latter to be true. Alas. What could have been a powerful depiction of America's terrors proved instead to be an uncommon portrait flung against a blotchy landscape. ▶

Emphasized repeatedly by such observations as this (made of Bateman's skin technician): "I want Helga to check my body out . . . even though she's much older than I am—maybe thirty or thirty-five—and there's no way I'd ever fuck her." (p. 114)

## Earth by David Brin

New York: Bantam Spectra, June 1991; \$5.99 pb; 682 pages

reviewed by L. E. Modesitt, Jr.

*Earth* reminds me of a symphony, one of those where innumerable sub-themes are never resolved until the last coda. In many ways, the book is brilliant. The words flash, and the many varieties of human nature are depicted, but always in bright colors. The depth of intellectual and scientific detail is staggering.

Brin almost drowns the reader in well-written and intricately woven themes and details, and his cast of characters covers the geographic range from the depths of the earth to the moon and beyond, from poor farmers and inner city youth to the rich and privileged.

In the end, all the main characters and details come together with a satisfying, crashing and triumphant coda.

So why did *Earth* leave me so depressed? After all, it has most of the ingredients for a so-called "great" book—strong characters, love and sex interests, an intricate plot, believable scientific details and background. It has divorce, love, friendship, betrayal, and transcendence of mortal limitations, and it deals with the most current of "chic" topics—the environment.

Unfortunately, because Brin is a cockeyed optimist, the discrepancy between what could be and what now exists and probably will exist is staggering. Brin's weaknesses in understanding (or his avoiding) of how technology and economics work in the real world undermines the believability of his construct. Admittedly, in his preface, he states that the book depicts the "most encouraging tomorrow I can imagine right now." Yet . . . in his "Afterword," he admits that he exaggerated the impact and speed of the greenhouse effect. Perhaps I'm quibbling, but it seems to me difficult to have it both ways. Can an author exaggerate the impact of adverse climate impacts, with all the attendant economic and social changes they will provoke, and then claim that his view is the most optimistic possible?

Still, Brin's portrayal of the future of earth is written large—large in both strengths and weaknesses.

In portraying technology and describing nature scientifically, Brin is masterful—showing how data networks will grow and impact society, illustrating graphically the possibilities of technology: revitalizing some aspects of food production; shifting social and political patterns based on climate change and information storage technology and retrieval; use of genetic engineering for reforestation; extrapola-

tion of nuclear space developments.

To set up his expertise, Brin opens with a series of short scenes and technical excerpts to frame the situation, followed with Teresa, the shuttle pilot, docking a future shuttle, the *Pleiades*, to "Reagan Station." In turn, we learn more about Alex Lustig, the brilliant physicist, and his quest to stabilize the miniature black hole he has created within the earth itself. In such scenes throughout the entire book Brin explains, supplies technical data, and offers a scientist's judgement on those who do not fully understand science.

For example, the pilot Teresa characterizes the shuttle *Atlantis* as "a developmental spacecraft" and criticizes current space officials with her statement that "it was dumb, even criminal, to pretend that [they] the early space shuttles" were "routine orbital delivery vehicles." This is surrounded with description, almost in passing, of the maze of equipment aboard the shuttle and its unnecessary complexity.

In addition, sandwiched inside the book, if one cares to read in detail, is a summary of the major developments leading to the present and beyond, a primer, if you will, on geology and ecology:

" . . . the so-called catastrophes of the Permian and Triassic and Cretaceous . . .

" . . . within a few millennia, it has stripped vast portions of the planet, turning them into barren desert. . . . The animal isn't Man . . . it is the goat."

"Back in the year 1990, the people of the United States of America paid three billion dollars for eighteen thousand million disposal diapers. Into these snug, absorbent, well-engineered products went one hundred million kilograms of plastic, eight hundred million kilograms of wood pulp, and approximately five million babies . . ."

" . . . the most recent planetological survey indicates that the islands of Japan contain approximately ten percent of the world's volcanoes . . ."

"The best models now show our sun's life zone is probably very broad indeed, stretching from just under one astronomical unit all the way out past three or more."

Add to that a wealth of real, amplified, and invented mythological and sociological data, and the resulting reading is rich indeed.

Unhappy, Brin is at his weakest in depicting human nature and interactions; not surprising, given his background. Take, for example,

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Kenneth L. Houghton  
The End of the End of the Alphabet

So we decided to do a tribute to Theodor S. Geisel, probably in verse. We've had better ideas.

"Can you guys do better than [Paul] DiFilippo did?" No; "My Alphabet Starts Where Your Alphabet Ends" is an amazing piece of work, "a tribute to an unsung Grand Master of the SF field."

Unsung. And it's really too late to sing now.

This magazine has published a lot of obituaries, from Donald Barthelme to Sharon Baker and time-points in between. Why another?

The living often need to honor the dead.

Especially the first sf writer many read

He explored alternate worlds. *Horizon Hears a Who* is no less effective in the sf canon (such as it is) than "He Who Shrank." The inhabitants of Whoville have at least as strong a sense of purpose as those in the world of "Surface Tension." There is at least as much to be learned about Adolf Hitler from "Turtle the Turtle" as there is in *The Iron Dream*—or *Mein Kampf*, for that matter.

I could go on, singing the praises of writing *The Butter Battle Book* while the Chief of the Ship of State is babbling about an "Evil Empire" (which even then was begging for food and subsidies). I could pontificate about *Green Eggs and Ham* as a statement about the evils of prejudice, or just revel in the entertainment value of *The Cat in the Hat* books or *Fox*

in *Socks* or the classic *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*.

Too late. The man is dead.

Dr Filippio's essay in *Nebula Awards 24* was "[deleted], but perhaps in time to do him justice." This is just belated.

Theodor Geisel wrote children's books. He was a fantasist. He never won a Hugo, a Nebula, or a World Fantasy Award. I don't believe he went to conventions—certainly he was never a WorldCon Guest of Honor—but over his fifty-some-year writing career, his books didn't go out of print. He's been a—maybe the—major influence on three or four generations of readers and writers, genre-based or not.

With the help of a co-author, he tried to expand his audience recently, writing for an older level of reader (as if one is ever too old to read *The Lorax* or *And To Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*). Oh, *the Places You'll Go* is a popular graduation gift; this year, again, it became a *New York Times* Book Review #1 Bestseller. He even wrote a book explicitly for "obscure children" (read: adults; *You're Only Old Once!*). It's more depressing than his worst, even with its upbeat ending ("you're in pretty good shape/for the shape you are in").

Enough. I'm going to put *Bitcher's Brew* on the CD player for Miles, get the copy of *Turtle the Turtle* and *Other Stories* off the bookshelf, and glory in that which is left.

It's all we can do.

Theodor Seuss Geisel is dead; Dr. Seuss lives on.

Sam Hutton, the billionaire Maori industrialist. Sam is a wonderful character, but having met a few millionaire industrialists, I have yet to meet or to read about one as sane or as balanced as Brin's. In addition, few individuals, no matter how brilliant, will commit to a multimillion dollar project on the strength of one conversation, or without at least running the idea by a few others, and certainly not without a long consideration of such a project. Impulsiveness is not a survival trait for billionaires—planning and consideration are. It's not that a man could not make an impulsive decision; it's just that the man who does so is most unlikely to be a billionaire.

Likewise, Alex Lustig is also brilliant, a scientist who not only creates a black hole, but figures out the impossible, then single-handedly develops a defense against the bad guys. The bad guys take whole teams and years to discover what Alex does virtually single-handedly in a few months. It's wonderful, but... believable?

Or the underground escape scenes when Alex and Teresa struggle through what seem the bowels of hell—they're fun, but they seem more likely to exist in a James Bond novel.

More important, Brin also appears to have chosen to ignore how large masses of people adopt and/or reject technology and how they have historically made economic decisions.

This may be because Brin has chosen to ignore the deeper background of economics, and what I will call, in a moment of vanity, Moresitt's law of development (and if someone else has already formulated it, my deepest apologies and condolences): The rate of adoption of new technology is inversely proportional to the cost of the product, and directly proportional to its portability.

How do such issues tie into *EARTH*?

The United States has developed on the basis of cheap transportation. What happens to people, to millions of units of suburban or exurban housing with low density when and if long-distance commuting becomes prohibitively expensive? What happens to social structures? Political parties and alliances? We're talking about the most politically powerful sector in the United States, not to mention the fact that there isn't enough wealth or technology to rebuild U.S. low-density cities, or the political interest in doing so.

Are we talking information commuting, through computers?

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Fine—except not all services can be done that way, and who pays for the equipments and energy at a time when the costs of both are rising? (Forget the unitary costs of computing power, which is dropping, and consider the actual cost of capacity required by sophisticated equipment.)

In practical terms, then, why, nearly a half century after solar heating became a practical possibility for individual homes, are less than two percent of all U.S. dwellings heated in such a fashion? Because the capital cost is far higher than those of competing systems. Forget trying to convince people that the long-term costs are lower, amortized over the life of the house. People still don't think that way—even highly educated professionals.

Why is in-depth computer usage still restricted to a minority of the U.S. population? Despite GUI, you need a high degree of sophistication and literacy to use a computer, and you need the ability to handle abstracts—and that means education.

Yet the increasing costs of both housing and education have already begun to decrease both college attendance and home-owning and building in the U.S.

Human nature, as demonstrated in this and other examples, has never easily accepted either major changes in society or implementation of rapid and significant changes in technology. Railroad and newspaper workers are still protesting automation. The paperless office remains largely an illusion. Recycling is practiced on a small scale, and the necessary secondary materials markets lack adequate financing and capitalization. Recycling oil out of scrap tires has been feasible for years, but few governments or industries have integrated the economic and environmental costs of burying tires with the process, and tire fires and dumping continue decades after a technologically feasible solution has been demonstrated.

Yet, despite the fact that economics has thwarted more globally sensitive projects than all the villains in history, economic forces, except as the undisputed villain of the "Helvetian War," just don't seem to exist in *EARTH*.

Brin has one main character, Logan Eng, traveling the globe at least partly to illustrate the massive capital projects developed to maintain food and water supplies for a struggling world. At the same time, myriad space stations orbit above, doing little except clandestine research.

Sorry, it hasn't worked that way, and it won't. For example, the fight over appropriations for just one U.S. space station seems to revolve around whether experimental funds or space/research funds are cut, not how to preserve funding for perhaps the two best long-term hopes for the planet. Likewise, every nuclear plant, virtually every new river diversion and dam program in recent years in the U.S. has been scuttled by popular opinion, despite brown-outs, regional power shortages, and water rationing in cities and towns. Yet Logan Eng travels from one vast project to another—from levees to dams to a massive tidal diversion and protein development projects in the Bay of Biacy.

People have never supported what they do not understand, and, especially today, technological advances are continuing to outpace understanding. Add to that the fact that, as the Russians discovered, a technological society cannot compete under an information blackout or extreme totalitarian conditions, and you have a situation where governments must bow to popular, and usually scientifically ignorant, pressure. That means that damned few nuclear power plants, tire recycling plants, waste-to-energy plants get developed, sited and permitted. Yet, through Logan Eng and his ex-wife Daisy, we see massive project after project designed to hold the wolves of starvation and privation at bay.

In addition, it's rather unlikely that the world's ecology will disintegrate as quickly as Brin postulates, or that humans will be able to adopt new technology on a wide-spread basis quickly enough to marshal the unified efforts postulated by Brin—not without widespread education and improved methods of shifting decades ingrained prejudices.

Brin never postulates the mechanisms for either massive education or shifting public opinion—or the vast resources necessary. TANSTAAFL (there ain't no such thing as a free lunch) not only applies to science, which Brin understands, but also to politics and education. Brin has set up a Catch-22 situation. If the mechanisms have been developed which are effective enough to allow the development of all these massive projects, where are they, and why can't they be used further? If they don't exist, then how can such changes in world society have taken place?

Questions such as these are conveniently overlooked in the quest for a scientific solution to a problem that has never been scientific. And

that is the fundamental problem of the book. Brin's theme is "science to the rescue."

As Brin notes in passing in his inserts, however, a great deal of ecological damage predates technology—from the widespread desertification created by sheep and goats to the building of cities unsuited for them. Technology is not, and never has been, the problem. The problem is ignorance, and Brin's "solution" is a technological "mama knows best" one. While it makes for a neat conclusion, and I suppose that's all that's necessary in a novel, I had hoped for an ending that was more realistic. That doubtless makes me even more of an optimist than Brin. After all, he writes in the Author's Preface, "it's about the most encouraging tomorrow I can imagine right now."

Like Judith Moffett (*Pennsylvania and The Ragged World*), Brin as at heart an elitist, and even as an elitist, he cannot figure any socio-technological solution that appears feasible. So in the end, he literally resorts to creating a *deus ex machina* resolution. In saying this, I realize, I am in the position of the man in the glass house, since my own "solution" (in *The Forever Here*) to earth's ecologic problems was an immortal near-supernatural. In my "Ecological Matter" trilogy, it merely took a galactic war, centuries of ecologic research, and a crew of finical ecologic builders/terrorists. So, in effect, I'm asking Brin to do what I did not. However, all of this underscores the point that few of us have yet reached, even in novelistic form, a solution that integrates real human behavior into a believable solution to the pyramiding environmental problem.

So, while *Earth* is a rich, detailed, educational, and fascinating book, it's not without some significant flaws—particularly if you have studied such subjects as economics, politics, and sociology.

Isn't there anyone out there who believes in a higher human nature? Or at least the triumph of long-term common sense over the easy path of fouling our own nest through short-term economic gain?

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*L.E. Modest, Jr., an environmental and economic consultant, is also a lecturer in English at Plymouth State College in Plymouth, N.H. His last book was The Magic of Becluse.*

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Greg Cox  
**Excerpts from *The Transylvanian Library:  
A Consumer's Guide to Vampire Fiction***

KING, STEPHEN

*Salem's Lot* (Doubleday, 1975: 440 pp.)

"One for the Road" (*Maine Magazine*, March/April 1977: 17 pp.)

"Popsy" (*Idiagues II*, 1987: 12 pp.)

... the horror of *Salem's Lot* is that of witnessing the archetypal Our Town of Rockwell, Wilder, and Bradbury electing Dracula as mayor and appointing his wives to the Board of Education.

—Thomas Disch (*Twilight Zone* magazine, April 1983.)

Actually, that's a perfect way to describe this book. What King has done—the whole point of his very impressive novel—is to unleash the traditional Creatures of Hell upon a convincingly-described, contemporary environment—which, curiously enough, is exactly what Bram Stoker did nearly a century before. Nowadays, however, Victorian London has entered Fantasyland, a place divorced from everyday experience. For a sense of reality, therefore, we must enter the quiet, commonplace town of Jerusalem's Lot.

King's Undead, forming among swirling dust-motes, scratching at windows, are straight out of *Dracula*. His master-vampire, Barlow, is simply the count himself, very thinly disguised. What makes *Salem's Lot* so effective is the utter believability of its human characters (of which there are a truckload).

To illustrate what I mean about the book's "believability," let me

single out one particular aspect of King's success. . . .

There is a special problem invariably faced by anyone attempting to create a contemporary novel of supernatural horror, especially when dealing with a hoary legend like the vampire. Simply put: how are modern characters to respond to creatures of superstition? There are two traps a story can fall into here. Either the mortals will adjust too easily, casually discarding their lifelong belief in 20th century rationalism with only token protestations, or they will stupidly ignore the obvious for half-bred theory, thus trying the patience of readers who know full well that there is a vampire in town.

The latter opinion, though more credible, is also the most dangerous. Remember *The Vampire Woman*?

In *Salem's Lot*, King confronts this dilemma and conquers it with careful precision. His protagonists are not dense; they recognize the traditional signs of a vampire abroad, but this awareness is not achieved without trouble or trauma. Throughout the story, the heroes maintain an almost schizophrenic attitude toward the common peril, alternating between moments of certainty and doubt. They disbelieve, they condemn themselves for their fears, but start grabbing stakes and crosses . . . just in case.

The one exception is Mark Petrie, an adolescent horror buff whose childlike faith in monster movie traditions keeps him alive while older, more sophisticated characters drop like flies. Deliberately or not, King knows how to flatter his chosen audience.

In another funny/realistic scene, a worried townspeople does a little appropriate research—by glancing through an issue of *Vampirella*.

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But there is more to *Salem's Lot* than horror fan in-jokes. First and foremost, this massive novel which deals with nothing less than the destruction of an entire community, goes beyond Stoker by describing the steadily escalating plague of vampirism that eventually threatens more than just a handful of brave men and women; vampires create vampires, who create more vampires, and so on in a geometric progression, until Undead outnumber the living and Jerusalem's Lot starts to resemble the world of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*. This sort of population explosion, which we might call 'Salem's Lot Syndrome,' has since become a common feature of contemporary vampire novels; see DUIGON, ELIOT, JAMES, McCAMMON, SKIPP/SPECTOR, SONTOW and WHALEN. Other authors avoid the Syndrome by making the process of transformation much more difficult, usually requiring a reciprocal blood exchange between vampire and victim (see KILLOUGH, ANNE RICE, STRIEBER, and HAMBLBY).

*Salem's Lot* still stands out from the crowd, though. King, as almost everyone must know, is the world's leading purveyor of horror stories, and he excels at his specialty: scaring the reader.

A 1979 television production, directed by Tobe Hooper, was generally faithful to the book. Reggie Nalder played Barlow in make-up based on the old silent *Nightmare* (1922), another unofficial *Dracula*. (You think this is incestuous? Just wait until we get to MON-ETTE!) On different occasions, *Salem's Lot* has been edited to fit two-hour, three-hour, and four-hour time slots. The longest version is probably the most effective.



King's 1979 collection, *Night Shift*, contains two stories related to the novel discussed above. "Jerusalem's Lot" is set in the same town, but otherwise is more Lovecraftian than vampiric. "One for the Road," however, is a direct epilogue to the events of *Salem's Lot*, as a family find themselves stranded in what appears to be a ghost town (close, but not quite!), and meet a little girl much like the one in "The Human Angle." Short, but creepy.

"Poppy" features another vampire moppet, this time lost in the brightly lit corridors of a modern shopping mall. Searching for his missing "Poppy," the child is found instead by a nervous kidnapper with unsavory intentions. Although an old hand at the kid-snatching business, the crook finds this particular victim more of a handful than usual, especially when Poppy himself comes winging into the scene, bearing a striking resemblance to the Count. The obvious moral: don't mess with the children of you-know-who.

King is in a more playful mood here than with his earlier tales, treating the reader to something very like the gruesome fun of old *Fifties* horror comics.



#### ROBESON, KENNETH

*The Avenger #33: The Blood Countess* (Warner, 1975: 142 pp.)

Robeson, as the cover of this paperback novel proudly reminds us, is the creator of the immortal pulp hero, Doc Savage, as well as the continuing chronicle of the crime-fighting adventures of Richard Henry Benson, AKA The Avenger. Imagine my disillusionment when, as a young Librarian, I discovered that "Kenneth Robeson" was a house name used by any number of pulp writers in the Thirties and Forties, and more recently by the ever-prolific Ron Goulart. "By the creator of Doc Savage," indeed!

Given that Goulart was then writing the *Vampirella* series as well, the only surprising thing about *The Blood Countess* is the lack of any genuine Undead. We have plenty of Nazi spies, yes, and a beautiful antisocial who may or may not be a descendant of Elizabeth Bathory, but the only true bloodsucker turns out to be a fat old woman who thinks she's a vamp. Kind of a let-down, really, as even one of the Avenger's agents admits:

"I have to admit I was a little disappointed in this vampire case. . . .

Not one authentic vampire in the whole shooting match. When I get an occult case, I like it to say that way."

Who are we to disagree?



#### SABERHAGEN, FRED

*The Dracula Tape* (Warner, 1975: 206 pp.)  
*The Holmes-Dracula File* (Ace, 1978: 250 pp.)  
*An Old Friend of the Family* (Ace, 1979: 247 pp.)  
*Thorne* (Ace, 1980: 347 pp.)  
*Dominion* (Tor, 1982: 320 pp.)

Let's take these one at a time, okay? Although collectively known as the "New Dracula" series, these books vary in content, in style, and in quality.

*The Dracula Tape* is the first and best of the series: a witty rebuttal of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as recounted by the Count himself. And about time too. *Dracula* was, after all, the only major character who did not get a chance to narrate a portion of the story. Hardly seems fair, does it?

The speaker here is not so much Stoker's Count as Saberhagen's: a misunderstood-but-noble immortal, a sensible and rational fellow who subsists mostly on the blood of animals and hefty doses of solar energy. Yes, *solar*. It is *Dracula's* own theory that the Undead derive their energy from the sun's radiation, and that they avoid broad daylight out of fear of a power overload.

Seen in this light, the title "Prince of Darkness" becomes rather inappropriate.

As a rule, Saberhagen's vampires are subject to all the old rules regarding mirrors, invitations, and the like. They are, on the other hand, completely immune to religious artifacts, being equally capable of good or evil.

Certainly if *The Dracula Tape* is to be believed, the Count is no villain. Before his narrative is finished, Dracula has provided alternative accounts of most of the events in Stoker's version, proving himself innocent of all the crimes he has always been accused of. He did not destroy the crew of the *Demeter*. He did not mean to frighten Jonathan Harker. And, most importantly, he never tasted a woman's blood without her consent.

Mina Harker, for one, comes off as a very different character in this account.

But the only true villain here is Doctor Van Helsing, who is portrayed by Dracula as a sadistic madman, a demagogue, and a quack. And all of Stoker's heroes, only poor cuckolded Jonathan emerges with reputation intact.

All in all, *The Dracula Tape* is less a new novel than a lengthy commentary on the original *Dracula* story. Stoker's text is quoted liberally throughout, and ransacked mercilessly for inconsistencies, absurdities, and exaggerations. The end result is quite clever and very, very funny.



The various sequels are straight-faced occult thrillers, less satirical in tone and, consequently, less amusing. They retain, however, Saberhagen's engaging conception of *Dracula-as-Hero*.

In *The Holmes-Dracula File*, Dracula returns to England (and Mina) just in time to run afoul of the celebrated detective of Baker Street. It's a gimmick intriguing enough to sustain a novel (see also ESTLEMAN), but Saberhagen is not content to leave it at that. Instead, he severely overloads the plot with gimmicks and contrivances, asking the reader to accept not only that Sherlock Holmes and Dracula may co-exist, but that:

1. Dracula develops a case of amnesia after being hit on the head, and cannot remember that he is a vampire.
2. Dracula and Holmes look exactly alike, so that even

Watson cannot tell them apart.

3. Holmes already has another twin—who is also a vampire! And, on top of all this, the Giant Rat of Sumatra is dragged in. Plus a plot to destroy London during the Queen's Jubilee!

Do not misunderstand; the book is entertaining, but I enjoyed the book much more the second time around, when fully prepared for the more outlandish turns in the plot.



*An Old Friend of the Family* is a contemporary horror novel about an average American family, the Southernlands, who are being persecuted by unknown enemies (one daughter murdered, a son kidnapped and tortured). Help eventually arrives in the form of a secretive European visitor of unusual abilities. The Southernlands, by the way, are the last living relatives of Jonathan and Mina Harker.

Saberhagen coyly avoids using "that name" throughout the entire book, but leaves no doubt as to the true identity of the family's mysterious ally.

This was, to me, the least interesting of the series.



Name games are still being played in *Thorn*. This time, the enigmatic stranger goes by the name of Mr. Jonathan Thorn. In flashback sequences, though, Thorn recalls his breathing days as Vlad Drakulya, Prince of Wallachia.

*Thorn*, the novel, is two stories in one, with alternating chapters telling of both Thorn's ruthless pursuit of an antique painting in modern-day Arizona, and of the young Impaler's pursuit of that same painting's beautiful model in 15th-Century Italy.

Jumping back and forth between the two plots gets a bit frustrating sometimes (especially since the medieval adventure is more interesting), but this is probably the strongest entry in the series since *The Dracula Tape*. Thorn comes off as simultaneously horrific, heroic, and human. There's an emotional ending too, that's not easily forgotten.



If the first book is the funniest, and *Thorn* the most dramatic, then *Dominion* is definitely the wildest. For the first time, Vlad (now called "Talisman") runs across someone who can even give the King-Vampire pause: an awesomely powerful old wino whose true name Saberhagen typically avoids. Only very slow readers, though, will not catch on that this is really "Dracula Meets Merlin" in disguise.

They don't exactly hit it off; the first response of the wino (Merlin) is to zap Talisman (Dracula) back to the time of Camelot. After much time-travelling, a werewolf, a magic sword, and several murders, the wizard and the vampire settle their differences in time to save the world, but by then (Merlin) has pretty much taken over the book. The Prince of Wallachia remains impressive, but upstaged.



Saberhagen has recently continued the series with *A Matter of Taste* and *A Question of Time*, both of which I hope to read soon. If nothing else, Saberhagen's origin for Dracula is my personal favorite: Resurrection through sheer force of will.

CAMPBELL, RAMSEY

"Conversion" (1976: 5 pp.)

"The Sunshine Club" (1983: 6 pp.)

Things are seldom what they seem in Campbell's horror stories, sometimes more so than others.

The title of "Conversion" hints strongly at the surprise ending of this little story, written in the second person, about a Transylvanian peasant who returns home to his wife, not quite aware of how much he has changed since last they met. Most vampire enthusiasts will catch on much more quickly, especially if they've read "Over the River."

"The Sunshine Club" is not so easy to figure out. We have another psychiatrist, yes, and a patient with a thing about blood, sunlight, and mirrors, but is Clive Bent a vampire who wants to be a human or a human who wants to be a vampire? And what exactly is the doctor anyway?

I admit it; I've read "The Sunshine Club" several times now and the point (and plot) remains obscure. Is your humble Librarian merely dim, or has Campbell been perhaps too deliberately enigmatic? You may find the story in *Vampires*, edited by Alan Ryan, if you wish to judge for yourself. "Conversion" can be found in another anthology, *The Ritual of Fear*. See Bibliography.

For Campbell in a less challenging, more nostalgic mood, see DREADSTONE.



CHETWYND-HAYES, RONALD

*The Monster Club* (UK: New English Library, 1976: 193 pp.)

*Dracula's Children* (UK: William Kimber, 1987: 208 pp.)

*The House of Dracula* (UK: William Kimber, 1987: 206 pp.)

Says a daughter of Dracula about her favorite victim, *Lower*: "as nice a piece of grunt-grumble-drinkle-dry as ever placed hand where it had no business to be—if I makes myself clear."

Well, not always, but such dialogue is typical of the bizarre world created by Ronald Chetwynd-Hayes, where amiable monsters go about their devilish business in a disarmingly casual fashion, mating and marrying to produce strange new hybrid creatures, and heaven help the poor mortal who stumbles into this sometimes comic, sometimes chilling milieu. The fine line between humor and horror is trampled on repeatedly in the stories in these collections—with mixed results.

In *The Monster Club*, a foolish Londoner visits a downtown watering-hole that caters exclusively to werewolves, vampires, zombies, and their various exotic progeny. Granted, he is treated to the reminiscences of a halfbreed "werevamp," among other tales, but the dues at the Club turn out to be unusually draining.

Appropriately, the movie version, starring Vincent Price as the vampire-host, was filmed by the same people who made *The Vault of Horror*. See OLECK.

If *The Monster Club* reads like Charles Addams with a British accent ("You know, Mother, that's as fine a jug of AB as you've ever served up . . ."), the two Dracula books take on the more ambitious task of elucidating the Impaler's family tree. Seems that the Count had several children by his three vampire brides (here named Barbuska, Marikova and Nanaskya), producing a modern generation of glamorous, amoral demon princes and princesses whose individual adventures Chetwynd-Hayes dutifully chronicles, with varying degrees of seriousness. While there's nothing here as overtly comic as *The Monster Club's* "The Werewolf and the Vampire" (in which the titular couple are done in by a nasty little boy who has read too many horror comics), such stories as "Marikova" and "Kar!" suffer from an uneasy mixture of fear and laughter, as well as a strain of misogyny that runs through much of Chetwynd-Hayes's work. Tales like "Gilbert," on the other hand, about the ambiguous relationship between a gruff military man and a diffident boy vampire, strike some genuinely eerie chords.

Idiosyncratic and offputting, Chetwynd-Hayes's world of monsters is probably something of an acquired taste. Fortunately, many of these stories have been anthologized elsewhere (as in *Vampires*) so you should have no trouble finding a sample.

A novel titled *The Partaker* (William Kimber, 1980) is also reputedly vampiric. *Dracula's Children* should not be confused with another novel of the same name (see LORTZ).



# Work in Progress

A Bibliographic Checklist of First Editions, by L. W. Currey

Draft. Compiled 2/91

\* indicates entry not seen

## JOHN BLACKBURN b. 1923

\* BAD PENNY. *London: Robert Hale, [June 1985].*

A BEASTLY BUSINESS. *London: Robert Hale, [1982].*  
Boards. First published in Great Britain 1982 on copyright page.

BLOW THE HOUSE DOWN. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1970].*  
Boards. First published 1970 on copyright page. Issued later in the U.S. as BOUND TO KILL.

BLUE OCTAVO. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1963].*  
Boards. First published 1963 on copyright page.

A BOOK OF THE DEAD. *London: Robert Hale, [1984].*  
Boards. First published in Great Britain 1984 on copyright page.

\* BOUND TO KILL. *New York: M. S. Mill Company, 1963.*  
Issued earlier in Great Britain as BLUE OCTAVO.

BROKEN BOY. *London: Secker & Warburg, 1959.*  
Boards. . . . first published 1959 . . . on copyright page.

BURY HIM DARKLY. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1969].*  
Boards. First published 1969 on copyright page.

CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1966].*  
Boards. First published 1966 on copyright page.

COLONEL BOGUS. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1964].*  
Boards. First published 1964 on copyright page. Issued later in the US as PACKED FOR MURDER.

THE CYCLOPS GOBLET. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1977].*  
Boards. First published 1977 on copyright page.

\* DEAD MAN RUNNING. *London: Secker & Warburg, [1969].*

DEAD MAN'S HANDLE. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1978].*  
Boards. First published 1978 on copyright page.

DEEP AMONG THE DEAD MEN. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1973].*  
Boards. First published 1973 on copyright page.

DEVIL DADDY. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1972].*  
Boards. First published 1972 on copyright page.

THE FACE OF THE LION. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1976].*  
Boards. First published 1976 on copyright page.

THE FLAME AND THE WIND. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1967].*  
Boards. First published 1967 on copyright page.

FOR FEAR OF LITTLE MEN. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1972].*  
Boards. First published 1972 on copyright page.

\* THE GAUNT WOMAN. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1962].*

THE HOUSEHOLD TRAITORS. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1971].*  
Boards. First published 1971 on copyright page.

MISTER BROWN'S BODIES. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1975].*  
Boards. First published 1975 on copyright page.

\* MURDER AT MIDNIGHT. *New York: M. S. Mill Company, [1964].*  
Issued earlier in Great Britain as THE WINDS OF MIDNIGHT.

NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1968].*  
Boards. First published 1968 on copyright page.

OUR LADY OF PAIN. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1974].*  
Boards. First published 1974 on copyright page.

\* PACKED FOR MURDER. *New York: M. S. Mill Company, [1964].*  
Issued earlier in Great Britain as COLONEL BOGUS.

A RING OF ROSES. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1965].*  
Boards. First published 1965 on copyright page. Issued later in the US as A WREATH OF ROSES.

\* THE RELUCTANT SPY. *New York: Lancer Books, [1966].*  
Wrappers. Issued earlier in Great Britain as A SCENT OF NEW-MOWN HAY. Note: Possibly a ghost entry; cited by Allen J. Hubin, *The Bibliography of Crime Fiction 1749-1975* (1979) and John M. Reilly (ed), *Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers* (1985), 2d ed.

ASCENT OF NEW-MOWN HAY. *London: Secker & Warburg, 1958.*  
Boards. . . . First published 1958 . . . on copyright page. Issued later in the US as THE RELUCTANT SPY.

THE SINS OF THE FATHER. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1979].*  
Boards. First published 1979 on copyright page.

A SOUR APPLE TREE. *London: Secker & Warburg, 1958.*  
Boards. . . . First published 1958 . . . on copyright page.

THE WINDS OF MIDNIGHT. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1964].*  
Boards. First published 1964 on copyright page. Issued later in the US as MURDER AT MIDNIGHT.

\* A WREATH OF ROSES. *New York: M. S. Mill Company, [1965].*  
Issued earlier in Great Britain as A RING OF ROSES.

THE YOUNG MAN FROM LIMA. *London: Jonathan Cape, [1968].*  
Boards. First published 1968 on copyright page.

Note: This is part of a series of bibliographic checklists of SF and fantasy writers that will update, revise, and expand the standard reference work *Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors* by L. W. Currey. For the organizational principles and methodology used in this and future lists, please refer to the introduction to that work. Knowledgeable persons are invited to communicate addenda and corrigenda directly to L. W. Currey, Elizabethtown, NY 12932.

# Screed

(letters of comment)

Eleanor Arnason, Minneapolis, Minnesota

I notice that large numbers of people have taken Dan Simmons to task, which means I won't have to write anything. I'm not sure it was kind of you to let him expose himself that way, but I guess there's no law that says that editors need to be kind, and God knows people in the science fiction subculture do not seem to mind making fools of themselves in public. Any can will tell you that.

I'd like to see the question of what—if anything—is wrong with *sf* continued, though not at the level of Simmons and Panishin. I just discovered a magazine called *Mondo 2000*, which apparently originates at the interface of Rock, Punk, Cyberpunk, and hacking. Interviews with Brian Eno, William Burroughs, Kathy Acker, an article on virtual sex, an article on some guy who has designed a computerized bicycle. It weighs 350 pounds and has 54 speeds. "... While mobile, I've still got access to DOS, Mac and SPARC environments, each of which is networked via cellular phone modems and packet radio to the rest of the world." He came up with this idea while pedaling through a dull part of Texas. Hey, he thought, I could be on a net right now.

After reading *Mondo*, I felt very old and very boring, rather like a party member in the soon to be discontinued USSR. The future is here, and I'm not in it.

I don't think I'm the only *sf* writer of whom this is true.

This is how my father must have felt, when he moved to the Guggenheim in 1960 and realized—as he must have realized—that he wasn't getting what was going on in New York. His generation was the Abstract Expressionists. He'd caught onto them in the 1940s. But they were old farts by 1960. Jesus, it's hard to live in a century where you outlive being *au courant* by 30 or 40 years.

George Ware, Dayton, Maryland

The personal nature of Mr. Platt's attack on Dan Simmons's June 1991 "Childhood's End" was, in my opinion, totally unwarranted. It's one thing to disagree with Mr. Simmons's article; I defend your right to do so. But it's quite another matter to couch your criticism in this invective.

I must admit that I admire Mr. Platt's days and work with *New Worlds*. I appreciated some of his earlier commentary pieces for *Interzone* ("The Vanishing Midlist" in the May/June 1989 issue and "Fairly Rich, Fairly Quick" in the June 1990 issue were real gems), and I even enjoy some of his fiction (*The Silicon Man*, for example). But, alas, Mr. Platt's personal attack on Dan Simmons merits a response. I detect a measure of envy and jealousy on Mr. Platt's part for not being able to produce novels such as *Carroll Comfort*, *Hyperion*, and *The Fall of Hyperion*. I feel he owes Mr. Simmons an apology.

First of all, I hardly consider J. G. Ballard, Harlan Ellison, Jack Vance, George R. R. Martin, William Gibson, John Barth, Thomas Pynchon, and others whom Simmons describes as "interesting stylings" to be, in Mr. Platt's words, "elderly wordsmiths whose work is an embarrassment by contemporary standards."

Secondly, the whole thrust of the negative tone of Mr. Platt's letter is that Dan Simmons's whole article is somehow outdated. For example, to quote Mr. Platt: Dan Simmons's "whole article could have been published twenty-five years ago"; all of the writers he cites "... emerged more than a quarter century ago"; and "he titles his article after a book that was published in 1953." Using this logic, I suppose *The Time Machine*, written in 1898, is outdated too.

Lastly, Mr. Platt condemns Simmons for being "oblivious to modern science fiction" and attacks Dan's comment on cyberpunk. I consider *Hyperion* and *The Fall of Hyperion* to be "modern science fiction" by Mr. Platt's definition. I do like cyberpunk fiction; Bruce Sterling, William Gibson, Rudy Rucker, and Lewis Shiner are very fine writers. But, not to detract from the quality of their fiction,

somehow, I've seen it all before—do you remember *The Stars My Destination*, Mr. Platt? Alfred Bester published it more than 25 years ago and it had all the energy, motifs, and power of the cyberpunks.

Alas, it appears to this middle-aged reader, that the middle-aged Mr. Platt, to borrow his own words, is the one who is "out to lunch."

Angus MacDonald, Concord, California

I learned a lot from Mr. Houghton's Cooters review, but I still think Waldrop is smarter than God.

Ken Houghton, New York, New York

Gordon Van Gelder's attempt to define the "new utopians" (*Post Punk*, NYRFSF #38), while moderately interesting, perpetuates one of the major errors which the *sf* field is wont to make.

I'm not, of course, convinced that Movements are (or ever have been) the place to look for important work, let alone importance. Certainly the writers he lists as influences on the "new utopians" (Diach, Wilhelm, Fowler, et al.) don't constitute a Movement as such; nor do I remember any of them being part of, let alone leader of, any such conflagration. It seems unlikely, for instance, that a writing school has or will develop around Connie Willis.

I am slightly more disturbed by Gordon's parameters. Contrasting "earth" to "rock 'n' roll" may be clever, but I doubt it's more than that. Should we dismiss the Bordertown writers for their all-punk-rock stories, or Emma Bull's *War for the Oaks* because there is a self-described "soundtrack" album and all the chapter headings are "rock" song titles?

What is included may be even more pernicious than the exclusions. Even were we to limit "earth" to environmental/ecological fiction (already a publishing subgenre), there are myriad other writers who seem to fit Gordon's parameters as "new utopians." Even excluding David (Earth) Brin, Gregory Benford, and James Morrow ("Daughter Earth," after all, leads off *Full Spectrum 3*) from the list of intelligent, heart-on-the-sleeve writers, we are still left with—a partial list, to be sure—Laura Moxon, Richard Grant, Elizabeth Hand, and Judith Moffett as "new utopians." Palwick and Chiang, judging by their recently published work, are not dealing with such grand issues (see "Effects of Captivity," in *The Pulphouse Softcover Magazine* #2 or the Van Gelder-referenced "Division by Zero").

Ultimately, I'm more interested in why Gordon's "line of best fit" is skewed so as to exclude more than that seems appropriate than it includes. I'm not certain whether he has defined a grandfather or just a karass of dubious viability; I am certain, however, that his random points on the curve have the feel of being either too exclusive due to an agenda being promoted (which I would hope not to be true) or too random to be grouped.

My objection, of course, is not that Gordon has cited the individual writers involved; I'm less convinced of the value of "Prism Tree" than he is, but not of Mr. Daniel's value and/or potential. I suspect Gordon's well-intentioned search for a trend—like the C-punks and S-punks and Humanists and People Who Played Poker at Horace Gold's and Campbellian/Astounding writers and Futurists before them—is more a "Whig" exercise than beneficial to either the field or the writers involved.

Ray Davis, San Francisco, California

Regarding Robert A. Collins's letter in NYRFSF #36, particularly his lament over the fine old WASP firm of "Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton and company" (how big is this company, anyway?) suffering the indignity of partnership with unnamed "women, blacks and gays"—I would disagree with him that "we're all Whigs." Clearly, some of us remain Tories.



## Changing Times

Here we are, approaching the end of 1991—the first year of the new decade is already past. This issue contains perhaps the last installment of Greg Cox's *The Transylvanian Library* we will run (unless Borgo Press delays its complete edition, the book will appear next month). We will continue to run Lloyd Currey's bibliographies, and are open to new projects.

Elsewhere in this issue, we take note of a new magazine devoted to the serious discussion of horror literature, *Necrofile*. We commend it to you as written by knowledgeable and insightful devotees. We also look forward to the next issue of Damon Knight's *Monad*, notable for its wide-ranging essays by practicing writers, and Steve Brown's *SF Eye*, which is always stimulating to disagree and agree with, both delayed but worth waiting for. The more discussion and dialog, the better. We lament the demise of *Australian SF Review* and anticipate with astonishment the announced reincarnation of Elton Elliot's *SF Review* as a nationally-distributed newsstand journal. All such magazines are needed in a day when the all-star panel on "Theory of Hard Science Fiction" at Chicon can be cancelled without notice because the masquerade needs more hours to set up. (The panelists were invited to hold their panel instead "in the foyer," i.e. the hallway!)

NTRSF has always been interested in theory and in history and we have a number of pieces in the works for future issues in draft now. We are working on a list of the best sf of the 1970s to remind everyone that it was not indeed a decade when nothing much was happening, a Rip Van Winkle nap between the New Wave and Cyberpunk—few recall that Rip slept through the American Revolution!

There are plans for an eighties list, too, partly drafted. And Kathryn Cramer is completing her work commenting on the horror survey we published earlier this year. Meanwhile, there is the World Fantasy Convention in Tucson, that we all plan to attend. Talk to us there if you have an idea for us. We plan to have a party. There will be interesting conversation and you can get involved if you're there. If not, well—you might consider subscribing to a magazine with plans for the future.

—David G. Hartwell & the editors

**Corrections:** In Alexei Panshin's "When The Quest Ended" in issue #38, he mentions an H.G. Wells novel that Robert A. Heinlein had autographed by the author; it was referred to as *The Sleeper Awakes* in the manuscript, and we thoughtlessly corrected it to the more usual *When The Sleeper Wakes*. However, research proves that *The Sleeper Awakes* is an alternate title, for a later revision of the same novel. We regret the error.—DGK

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